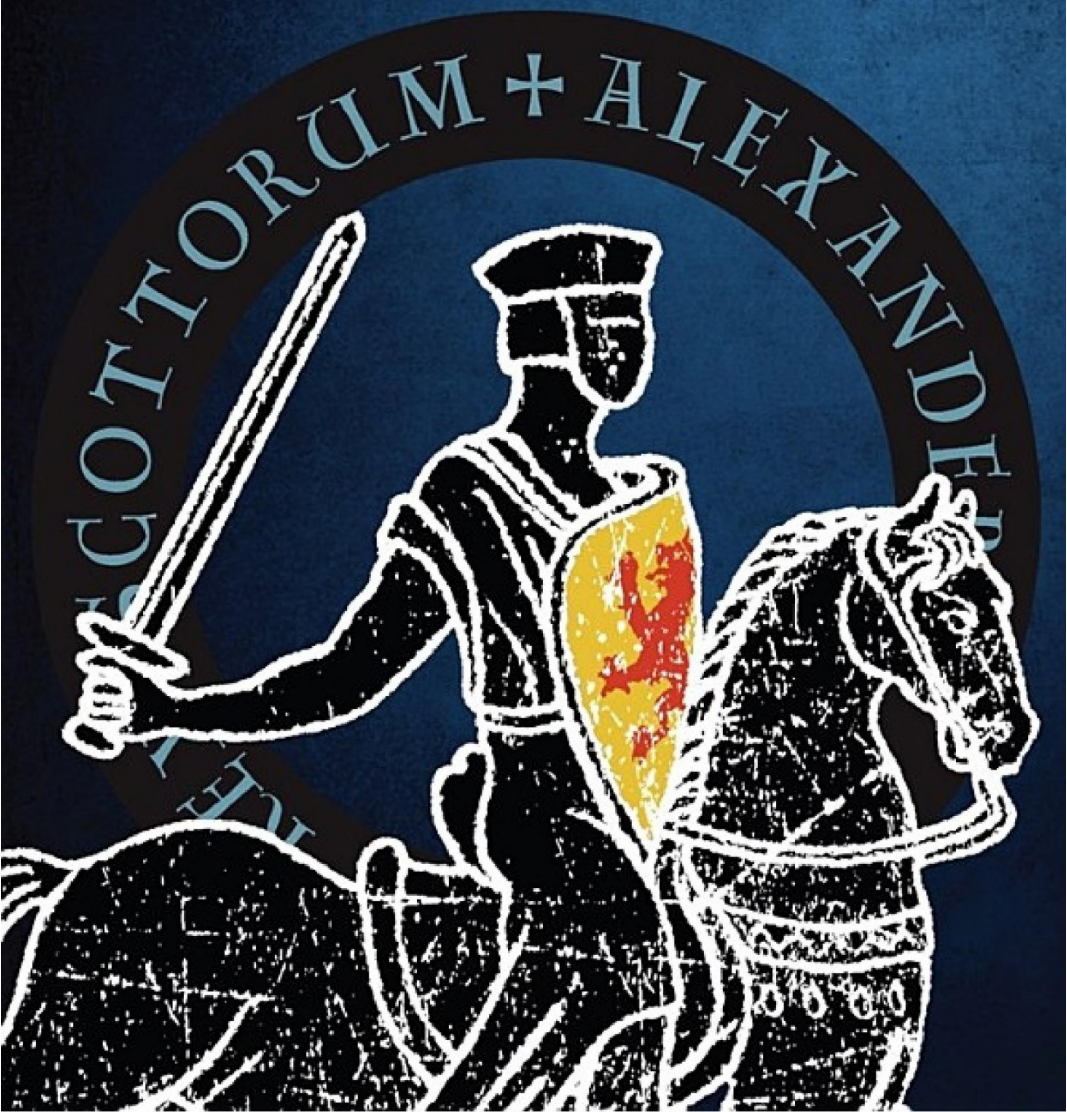
RICHARD ORAM

ALEXANDER II

1214–1249 KING OF SCOTS



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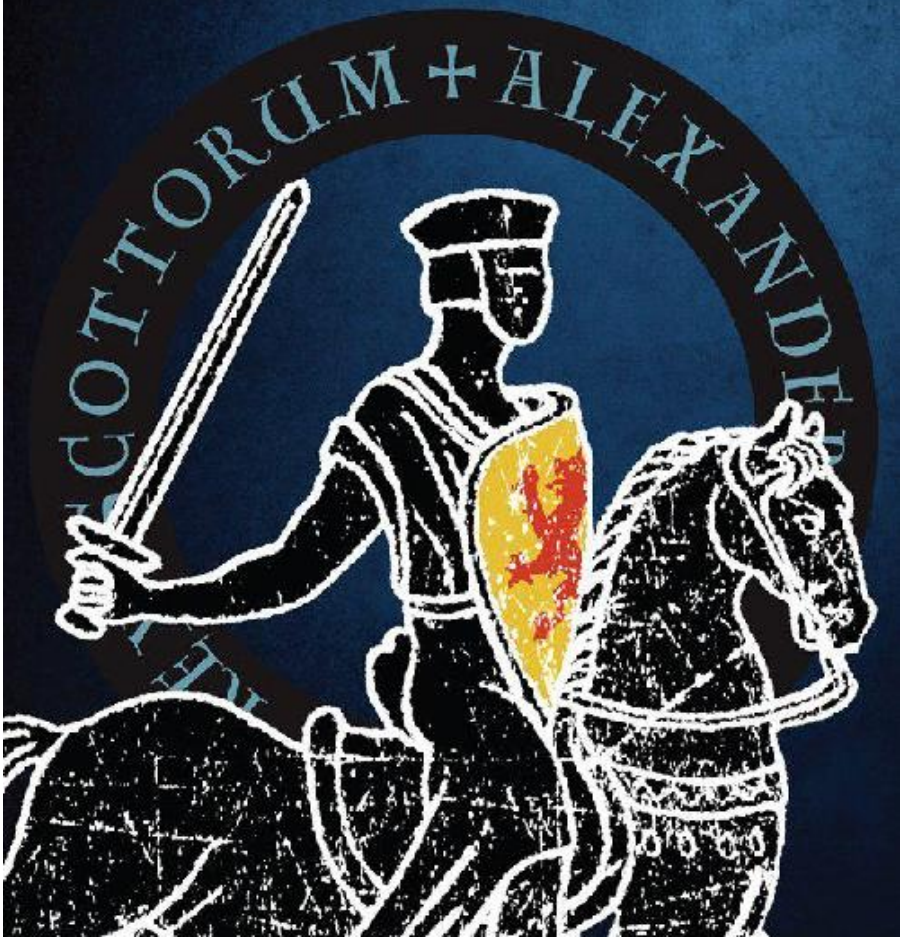

ALEXANDER II
KING OF SCOTS
1214–1249

RICHARD ORAM

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Contents

List of Plates
Acknowledgements and Dedication
List of Abbreviations
Introduction
1 The Shadow of the Past: Alexander's Heritage
2 The Fox-Cub and the Old Lion
3 Finding a Just Peace
4 Master in His Own House, 1215–1235
5 The Best of Friends and Neighbours?
6 Alexander Triumphant
7 The Church, the King and the King's Faith
8 Intellectual and Material Culture in Alexander II's Scotland
Conclusion
Bibliography
Index

Plates

1 Norham Castle, Northumberland: scene of William the Lion's stormy meeting with King John.

2 Arbroath Abbey, Angus: Alexander's first formal act as king was to join the cortege carrying his father's body from the bridgend at Perth to its burial-place in William's unfinished abbey at Arbroath.

3 Forfar Castle, Angus: the nineteenth-century tower marks the site of the royal castle where Alexander held his first Christmas court in 1214.

4 Brougham Castle, Cumbria: the donjon of Robert de Vieuxpont's castle which held out against Scottish attack in the war of 1215–17.

5 Barnard Castle, Co Durham: Alexander failed to take the castle during his race south to join the Dauphin Louis at Dover.

6 York Minster, York: scene of Alexander's marriage to Joan, sister of Henry III of England.

7 Tarbert Castle, Argyll and Bute: the grass-grown ruins of the castle built by Alexander to dominate Kintyre and the adjacent islands.

8 Fotheringhay Castle, Northamptonshire: only earthworks survive of the key castle of the earldom of Huntingdon, which Alexander sought to control during the minority of his cousin, Earl John.

9 Council Buildings, Forfar, Angus: the market cross where the last member of the MacWilliam family was brutally slain in 1231 stood in the street in front of the later burgh-council meeting-place.

10 Rothesay Castle, Argyll and Bute: stormed by the Norwegians in 1230 during their intervention in the civil war in the kingdom of the Isles.

11 Tomb of Alan of Galloway, Dundrennan Abbey, Dumfries and Galloway: the broken effigy in the north transept is identified traditionally as that of the last and greatest of Galloway's native rulers.

12 Urquhart Castle, Highland: the highest point of the castle at centre right is the remains of the shell-keep built by Alan Durward, to whom Alexander had granted this highly-strategic lordship which controlled the Great Glen.

13 Coucy-le-Chateau en Affrique, France: the outer curtain of the great castle of Queen Marie's family in north-eastern France.

14 Sound of Kerrera, Argyll and Bute: looking south across Oban Bay from Dunollie towards the island where Alexander died.

15 Melrose Abbey, Scottish Borders: the abbey church looking east from the fragments of the twelfth-century west front, the only surviving portion of the church that Alexander knew, towards the site of his tomb in the choir.

16 Balmerino Abbey, Fife: the fragmentary remains of the Cistercian abbey founded by Queen Ermengarde and the location of her tomb.

17 Pluscarden Priory, Moray: the restored crossing and choir of the church of the Valliscaulian monastery founded by Alexander II at the end of his long struggle with the MacWilliams.

18 Elgin Cathedral, Moray: the western towers and south transept of the new cathedral church commenced by Bishop Andrew de Moravia.

19 Dunblane Cathedral, Central: the tower of the cathedral inherited by Bishop Clement in 1233 and the nave of the new church which he commenced.

20 Glasgow Cathedral, Glasgow: interior of the choir of Bishop William de Bondington's cathedral.

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I owe a huge debt of gratitude to many friends and colleagues who have endured my waxing lyrical about many of the finer points of Alexander II's reign over the last two years as this work has finally come together. Particular thanks are owed to Alasdair Ross, whose research on Moray has transformed thinking about the relationship of this region with the crown and with Alexander's MacWilliam rivals, and Michael Penman, whose work on Alexander's personal faith made me rethink many of my preconceptions on the king's relationship with the Church across his reign. My greatest thanks, however, are to my friend and colleague Richard Fawcett, whose encyclopaedic knowledge of Scottish medieval architecture and abundant generosity with his time, and with whom close research collaborations on Scottish medieval parish churches, the abbeys of Melrose and Dryburgh, and most recently Elgin Cathedral, have hugely enriched my understanding of the cultural achievements of Alexander's day. Thanks are also very much due to Hugh Andrew for his patience in waiting for this text whilst I worked on an overdue commitment to another publisher, to Mairi Sutherland who has helped to steer the book to its final stages, and to all the other staff at Birlinn/John Donald whose patience I have tested thoroughly over the years.

To my son, Alasdair, who thankfully is neither named after Alexander II nor shares his more unpleasant characteristics, this book is dedicated to you.

Richard Oram, Stirling, 2012

ALC	*Annals of Loch Cé*, http://www.ucc.ie/celt/online/T1000010A
Anderson (ed.), *Early Sources*	Anderson, A O (ed.), *Early Sources of Scottish History, AD 500–1286*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1922)
Anderson (ed.), *Scottish Annals*	Anderson, A O (ed.), *Scottish Annals from English Chroniclers, AD 500–1286* (London, 1908)
Annales Monastici	*Annales Monastici*, ed. H R Luard, 5 volumes (London, 1864–9)
APS	*The Acts of the Parliaments of Scotland*, ed. T Thomson and C Innes (Edinburgh, 1814–75)
Arbroath Liber	*Liber Sancte Thome de Aberbrothoc*, 2 vols (1848–56)
AU	*Annals of Ulster*, http://www.ucc.ie/celt/online/T100001A
Balmerino Liber	*Liber Sancte Marie de Balmorinach* (Abbotsford, 1844)
Benedict of Peterborough	Benedict of Peterborough, *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi*, ed. W Stubbs, 2 vols (London, 1867)
Bower, *Scotichronicon*	Bower, W, *Scotichronicon*, ed. D E R Watt and others, 9 vols (Aberdeen, 1987–98)

Cal. Pat. Rolls	*Calendar of the Patent Rolls of Henry III*, *1216–25* (London, 1901); *1225–32* (London, 1903); and *1232–47* (London, 1906).
Cambuskenneth Register	*Registrum Monasterii Sancte Marie de Cambuskenneth* (Grampian Club, 1872)
CDI	*Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland*, ed. H S Sweetman (London, 1875)
CDS	*Calendar of Documents Relating to Scotland*, ed. J Bain, vol. 1 (Edinburgh, 1881)
Chron. Fordun	*John of Fordun's Chronicle of the Scottish Nation*, ed. W F Skene (Edinburgh, 1872)
Chron. Lanercost	*Chronicon de Lanercost* (Maitland Club, 1839)
Chron. Man.	*Chronica Regum Manniae et Insularum. The Chronicle of Man and the Isles. A Facsimile of the Manuscript Codex Julius A. VIII in the British Museum* (Douglas, 1944)
Chron. Melrose	*Chronicle of Melrose* (facsimile edition), eds A O Anderson and others (London, 1936)
Chron. Pluscarden	*Liber Pluscardenis*, ed. F J Skene (Edinburgh, 1877–80)
Chron. Wyntoun	*The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun* (Scottish Text Society,

	1903–14)
Close Rolls Henry III	*Close Rolls of the Reign of Henry III*, 14 vols (London, 1902–38)
CPL	*Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers Relating to Britain and Ireland: Papal Letters*, ed. W H Bliss and others (London, 1893–present)
Dunfermline Register	*Registrum de Dunfermelyn* (Bannatyne Club, 1842)
Durham Liber Vitae	*Liber Vitae Ecclesiae Dunelmensis*, ed. J Stevenson (Surtees Society, 1841)
Foedera	*Foedera, Conventiones, Litterae et Cuiuscunque Generis Acta Publica*, ed. T Rymer (Records Commission edition, 1816–69)
Glasgow Register	*Registrum Episcopatus Glasguensis* (Bannatyne and Maitland Clubs, 1843)
Henry III Letters	*Royal and Other Historical Letters Illustrative of the Reign of Henry III*, ed. W W Shirley, 2 vols (London, 1862–6)
Histoire des Ducs de Normandie	*Histoire des Ducs de Normandie et des Rois d'Angleterre*, ed. F Michel (Paris, 1840)
Holyrood Liber	*Liber Cartarum Sancte Crucis* (Bannatyne Club, 1840)
Kelso Liber	*Liber Sancte Marie de Calchou* (Bannatyne

	Club, 1846)
Letters of Guala	*Letters and Charters of Cardinal Guala Bicchieri, Papal Legate in England 1216–1218*, ed. N Vincent, Canterbury and York Society series, 83 (Woodridge, 1996) (1996)
Macphail, *Pluscardyn*	Macphail, S R, *History of the Religious House of Pluscardyn* (Edinburgh, 1881)
Matthew Paris, *Chron. Majora*	Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, ed. H R Luard, 7 vols (London, 1872–84)
Matthew Paris, *Historia Anglorum*	Matthew Paris, *Historia Anglorum*, ed F Madden, 3 vols (London, 1866–9)
Melrose Liber	*Liber Sancte Marie de Melrose* (Bannatyne Club, 1837)
Moray Register	*Registrum Episcopatus Moraviensis* (Bannatyne Club, 1847)
Newbattle Register	*Registrum Sancte Marie de Neubotle* (Bannatyne Club, 1849)
Paisley Register	*Registrum Monasterii de Passelet* (Maitland Club, 1832)
Raine, *North Durham*	Raine, J, *The History and Antiquities of North Durham* (London, 1852).
Register of Walter Grey	*Register of Walter Grey, Lord Archbishop of York*, ed. J Raine (Surtees Society, 1870)
RLP	*Rotuli Litterarum Patentiumin Turri*

	Londiniensi Asservati, ed. T Duffus Hardy (London, 1835)
RMS	*Registrum Magni Sigilli Regum Scotorum*, ed. J M Thomson and others (Edinburgh, 1882–1914)
Robertson, *Concilia*	*Concilia Scotiae: Ecclesiae Scoticanae Statuta tam Provinvialia quam Synodalia quae Supersunt, 1225–1559*: *Statuta Ecclesiae Scoticana*, ed. J Robertson, 2 vols (Bannatyne Club, 1866)
Roger of Howden, *Chronica*	*Chronica Roger de Hovedon*, ed. W Stubbs, 4 vols (London, 1868–71)
Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*	Rogeri de Wendover, *Liber qui dicitur Flores Historiarum ab anno Domini MCLIV annoque Henrici Anglorum regis secundi primo*, ed. H G Hewlett, 3 vols (London, 1886–9)
RRS, vol. 2	*Regesta Regum Scottorum*, vol. 2: *The Acts of William I*, ed. G W S Barrow (Edinburgh, 1971)
RRS, vol. 5	*Regesta Regum Scottorum*, vol. 5, *The Acts of Robert I*, ed. A A M Duncan (Edinburgh, 1988)
RRS, vol. 6	*Regesta Regum Scotorum*, vol. 6, *The Acts of David II*, ed. B Webster (Edinburgh,

	1976)
Scone Liber	*Liber Ecclesie de Scon* (Bannatyne Club, 1843)
Theiner (ed.), *Vetera Monumenta*	Theiner, A (ed.), *Vetera Monumenta Hibernorum et Scotorum Historiam Illustrantia* (Rome, 1864)
Walter of Coventry, *Memoriale*	*Memoriale Fratris Walteri de Coventreia*, ed. W Stubbs, 2 vols (London, 1872–3)

Introduction

‘A great prince and very greedy of this world’s honour’

[1]

Bracketed by the long and well-documented reign of his father William the Lion and by the supposed ‘Golden Age’ of the reign of his son Alexander III, the thirty-five years of King Alexander II’s rule have remained one of the least well studied yet most substantial reigns of an adult ruler in medieval Scotland. Widely recognised as a period of decisive change in the nation’s history, during which a new self-confidence in the nature and identity of Scottish kingship became apparent and relationships with external powers were redefined, the reign nevertheless remained curiously neglected in both medieval narrative sources and modern general histories of Scotland down to the later twentieth century. Why that should be is largely attributable to the broad characteristics assigned to the rule of his predecessor and successor in most of the contemporary or near-contemporary sources which have come down to us; Alexander’s personality and achievements did not fit the needs of later writers who were seeking to construct a particular kind of narrative and to formulate a particular ideal of Scottish kingship. As Norman Reid has expressed it:

On either side of Alexander, William’s reign is noteworthy because of the contrast within it of disaster (1174) and success (1189). Alexander III is the archetypical good king, leading his people to peace and stability. Alexander II is left nondescript between them, fitting neither purpose.[2]

Since Alexander II’s reign was not perceived to have witnessed the dramatic reversals and recoveries of fortune of his father’s, nor experienced the climax of Scottish territorial expansion and benefited from the ‘peace dividend’ as did his son’s, it was dismissed in a series of generalisations epitomised by the bland eulogies assigned to the records of his death in medieval chronicles.

For later generations of writers seeking to construct a kingdom-making narrative or to provide exemplars of ‘good kings’ for the instruction of later rulers, the records of Alexander’s achievements seemed to offer little that was useful to their purpose. This view was perhaps most jarringly expressed by Patrick Tytler in the opening

sentence of the preface to his monumental nine-volume *History of Scotland*, which he began to publish in 1828. 'I have commenced the History of Scotland at the accession of Alexander the Third,' he announced, 'because it is at this period that our national annals become particularly interesting to the general reader.'[3] In effect, he was dismissing not just Alexander II but all of his predecessors, including that greatest of Scottish state-builders, David I, to construct a narrative of Scottish identity-making that was grounded in the supposedly formative experiences of the kingdom complete and at peace in the reign of Alexander III and then reshaped through the traumas of the Wars of Independence; Alexander II had, it seemed nothing to offer in that tale. It was to remain thus in most subsequent Scottish histories, with the reign of Alexander II at best treated as part of a thirteenth-century continuum of the two Alexanders.[4] Only in the first decade of the twentieth century did Alexander II finally begin to gain separate treatment as a subject worthy of individual study.

Until 2005, the most scholarly examination of the king and his reign was a single chapter in Professor Archie Duncan's magisterial 1975 publication *Scotland: The Making of the Kingdom*.[5] This remains the best summary of the key events and developments of the reign, for it threw into sharp highlight the significance of Alexander II as a key figure in our national history; but its detail has been expanded and refined by a generation of new research which has transformed our understanding of the reign and the development of the kingdom in the first half of the thirteenth century. The most important single contribution to this new view of Alexander II's reign as pivotal in national development is constituted by the essays gathered in the 2005 volume *The Reign of Alexander II, 1214–49*.[6] Conceived of as an exploration of a series of broad themes and key relationships, ranging from the Anglo-Scottish war of 1215–17 through to the developments in all areas of law during the reign, it consciously moved from a focus on the king to the social, political, economic and cultural evolution of his kingdom. One of the most important dimensions of these essays was the stress that they threw onto the relationships between Alexander's kingdom, the wider British Isles and north-western Europe. Rather than being an introspective backwater, Scotland and its ruler were revealed as outward-looking participants in the great thirteenth-century flourishing of European society, culture and trade.

The Reign of Alexander II, 1214–49 redressed many injustices in the manner in which Alexander and his reign were treated in traditional

historiography. It did not, however, provide an opportunity to develop an extended reappraisal of his achievements as king in the domestic political and international diplomatic fields. This present study was conceived to address those issues. It is very much a political study and history of Alexander's life and reign, but with two short additional chapters that explore the king's relationship with the church and his senior clergy, and the intellectual and architectural achievements of his reign. Wider and far more detailed studies of the development of government and administration in the first half of the thirteenth century will be imminent additions to our understanding of Alexander's reign when volume 3 of *Regesta Regum Scottorum* is completed; the king's relationship with his nobles and officials has therefore not been treated in depth. For the same reason, the institutional evolution of royal government and administration is not addressed in this present study.

ONE

The Shadow of the Past: Alexander's Heritage

In late August 1186, William, king of Scots, was forty-three years old and had been Scotland's ruler for twenty-one years. Since the age of fourteen he had been driven by one burning ambition: he longed to regain what he believed passionately should have been his by inherited right. On the death in 1152 of his father, Earl Henry, only child of King David I, William had been vested with the earldom of Northumberland and lordship of Carlisle, which his grandfather had prised from English control during the long years of civil war that had riven the southern kingdom after 1135. In 1157, however, the new English king, David I's great-nephew the Angevin Henry II, having ended the civil conflict and imposed firm government over his domain which stretched from the border with Scotland to the Pyrenees, required William's elder brother King Malcolm IV to restore to English rule the land which formed William's inheritance. Bitterly aggrieved at the meagre compensation for his disinheritance that he had received, William hungered for his lost earldom and almost constantly agitated for its restoration. His ambition had not diminished after 1165, when he succeeded his childless elder brother as king of Scots; indeed it became a central theme in his dealings with King Henry. Theirs had been a stormy relationship from before the start of William's reign, Henry understanding well the obsession that drove his cousin, but it had taken on a wholly different complexion following William's disastrous intervention in the rebellion of 1173–4 led against Henry by his eldest son Henry, the Young King. Promised the restoration of Northumberland and Cumberland by the Young King, William had thrown in his lot with the rebels, only to experience defeat and captivity at the hands of Henry II's loyal northern English lords. Since then, William had been subject to the humiliating terms of the Treaty of Falaise by which he had secured his personal freedom from Henry's prison in Normandy; the cost, however, had been recognition of Henry's superior lordship over both him personally and over the whole of his kingdom. Regardless of the curbs on his independence as king that the treaty imposed, William still cherished hopes that some day he would secure the elusive prize.

Considering this obsession with his inheritance, however, there was an odd contradiction in William's personal life. In contrast to the

chaste reputation of his dead elder brother Malcolm, William had evidently been something of a hell-raiser in his youth and was the father of several acknowledged bastard children – daughters and sons – but he was still unmarried and had as his only legitimate heir his younger brother, Earl David of Huntingdon.[7] For all his efforts to regain his patrimony, William had as yet failed to produce the legitimate son to whom he would pass the inheritance he had striven for so long to secure. Now, in the late summer of 1186, all that was to change, and he journeyed south from Carlisle in the company of his overlord for marriage to the bride whom Henry had chosen for him.

Two years earlier, Henry had exercised his rights as superior lord to arrange the marriage of his vassal, William.[8] A high-status bride would have done much to restore the badly dented prestige of the Scottish king, sending out a signal that he was a man with powerful connections to be courted, not ignored; and, perhaps, she would bring with her a dowry that might resolve the impasse in the question of Northumberland and Cumberland. William certainly aimed high, requesting the hand of Henry's eldest granddaughter, Matilda of Saxony, a bride who would not only have strengthened the already close kinship of the Scottish and English royal houses but would also have given the Scottish king important political connections throughout northern Europe. Henry, however, had no intention of yielding any such prospects to William, but nor could he risk entirely alienating him by an outright refusal. Instead he used Matilda and William's unquestioned consanguinity as a reason to defer a decision until the pope's permission for a marriage within the prohibited degrees had been secured. Had Henry wished the marriage to proceed, it is likely that he would have petitioned harder and appealed when the request was rejected; his unquestioning acceptance of the decision sent a clear signal to William.[9]

The issue of William's marriage receded until the spring of 1186, when Henry needed to be sure of William's subservience as he struggled to settle a political crisis which had erupted in Galloway.[10] William, Henry knew, favoured the rival to his own preferred candidate for succession to the lordship there, but he was not prepared to accept any outcome that might weaken his influence in this highly strategic region. Accordingly, in May 1186 he summoned William and Earl David to Oxford, ostensibly to discuss his cousin's marriage, and detained him at court on the pretext of awaiting the arrival of his prospective bride, while the Scottish lords were ordered

to force Roland son of Uhtred, William's candidate in Galloway, to come to terms. Keeping William and David with him, Henry travelled to Carlisle in July to impose personally a settlement of the Galloway question, then in late August headed south, still accompanied by his cousins.[11] Finally, on 5 September in the chapel at Henry's manor at Woodstock in Oxfordshire, William received his bride.[12]

Given William's earlier ambition to secure a wife from within the close family of Henry II, we can perhaps assume that he was disappointed with the choice that Henry had made for him. Ermengarde, the daughter of Richard, vicomte of Beaumont-sur-Sarthe, was not as has sometimes been suggested entirely without social significance, being a distant cousin of the English king by virtue of her descent from Constance, one of Henry I's many illegitimate children,[13] but she lacked any more direct connection with royal blood such as Matilda of Saxony had possessed. Nevertheless, her father's albeit remote kinship with Henry was intended to strengthen the bonds between the two families, and her own wider Beaumont kin, although not of the highest noble rank, possessed estates in England, Normandy and Anjou and were politically very well connected amongst the nobility of England and northern France. Henry made every effort to make the marriage more palatable to William, paying for the wedding ceremony over which the archbishop of Canterbury, attended by three other bishops, presided, and for the four days of sumptuous festivities that followed. Ermengarde's dowry, too, although not the rich prize of Northumberland and Cumberland which William had hoped would have come with the hand of Matilda, was also a signal of Henry's favour towards him; Edinburgh Castle, surrendered to Henry under the terms of the Falaise agreement and occupied since then by an English garrison, was restored to William on condition that it should be held by his wife in dower.[14] It was a gesture by Henry which cost him little but which encouraged William to maintain his submissiveness. Acceptance of Henry's rights as superior lord had brought its first tangible results; what more might flow from continued loyalty? Now, William had hopes of a legitimate son and heir to whom both the kingdom of the Scots and a restored patrimony in northern England might descend.

Through the first nine years of his marriage, William's hopes remained largely unrealised. Ermengarde had become pregnant, but the child was a daughter – named Margaret after the royal saint from whom she and her father were descended – rather than the hoped-for

son. A second pregnancy resulted in 1196 in a second daughter, Isabella, a bitter disappointment for the ageing king. There had, however, been some substantial advances, most notably the regaining of his kingdom's full independence from English overlordship. Henry II's son, Richard I, having little interest in maintaining his father's policy towards Scotland and eager to raise funds to pay for his planned crusade, had in December 1189 agreed the so-called Quitclaim of Canterbury, which cancelled the Treaty of Falaise in return for payment of 10,000 merks of silver.[15] Over the northern counties of England, however, there was no movement, but William was undeterred by this lack of success. During Richard's absence on crusade and subsequent long imprisonment in Austria, William strove to rebuild connections with leading families within his lost patrimony: families whose support might help win him back his inheritance. In 1191, he arranged the marriage of his illegitimate daughter Isabella to Robert de Ros, lord of Wark-on-Tweed, and in 1193 a second illegitimate daughter, Margaret, was married to Eustace de Vescy, lord of Alnwick.[16] Despite his undiminished desire to regain Northumberland and Cumberland, however, William was nevertheless not prepared to gamble on supporting the English Prince John's attempted usurpation of the absent Richard's throne; a similar act in 1174 had cost him his freedom and compromised his kingship. Instead, he reckoned that a grateful Richard might be more amenable to discussions over the northern counties, and he sought to further ingratiate himself with the English king through a personal contribution of 2,000 merks towards his ransom.[17] Richard was indeed grateful, but he was still not prepared to yield what William wanted and delayed making any judgement of the Scottish king's renewed claims. Well understanding Richard's hunger for money but in an equally clear sign of his own desperation, William met him at Winchester and offered 15,000 merks – half as much again as he had paid to secure the freedom of his kingship from Richard's superior lordship – for a grant to him of the earldom of Northumberland. Richard was tempted but in the end offered William only the earldom's lands without its strategic castles, an offer wholly unacceptable to the Scottish king. 'Grieving and downcast', according to the well-informed English royal clerk Roger of Howden, William returned to his kingdom.[18]

In June 1195 William fell grievously ill at the royal manor at Clackmannan and, it is reported, was so sure he was dying that he made preparations for the succession. For the previous thirty years, it

had been assumed that the kingship would pass to his nearest legitimate male relative, his younger brother Earl David. Now, however, fearing that the inheritance which had eluded him for so long would pass forever from his lineage through default of a direct male heir, William dreamed up a radical alternative. In place of David, he proposed that Margaret, at this point his only legitimate child, should marry King Richard's nephew, Otto, the younger son of Henry the Lion, deposed duke of Saxony, and that the throne would pass to them on his death. William, however, had not consulted his nobles before presenting his proposal to Richard. Led by Patrick, earl of Dunbar, they reacted furiously to the scheme. It was, they declared, utterly uncustomary and without precedent in Scotland for the succession to the throne to pass to a woman, and still more unacceptable given that there was already a recognised male heir in the person of the king's brother, who also had a son.[19] A full-blown political crisis between William and his nobles was only averted by the king's recovery to full health, but even then he continued to explore the potential in the idea of a match between Margaret and Otto. Before the end of the year a new settlement was being negotiated which appeared to bring Northumberland and Cumberland at last within William's grasp; he would give Lothian to Otto and Margaret on their betrothal, with Richard holding the land and its castles in trust for the young couple until their marriage, while Richard likewise would give them Northumberland and Cumberland, with William holding the land and its castles. A deal seemed finally to be in prospect, but early in 1196 William withdrew his offer; the Scottish nobles remained implacably opposed to such an arrangement and, perhaps more importantly in the king's reckoning, Queen Ermengarde was again pregnant and William, 'hoping that the Lord would give him a son', would not risk any compromising of the inheritance of a direct male heir.[20] Although Ermengarde was delivered of Isabella, a second daughter, and not the son whom her husband so desired, the possibility of a negotiated settlement of William's claims to the northern English counties had gone and the scheme was never again revived.[21]

No record survives of how Earl David viewed his proposed disinheritance by his brother. There is certainly no record or suggestion of animosity between them; in 1196 David displayed his continuing loyalty to his elder brother by bringing his military following to accompany William on a campaign into the far north of Scotland.[22] It is probable that the open hostility to William's schemes

and outspoken support for David's status as heir-presumptive which the Scottish political community had displayed convinced him that there was no serious risk of losing his position. Indeed, his participation in the Caithness campaigns of 1196–7 might be read as a clear reminder of that status to William, and as a reassurance to the Scottish nobles who had supported his rights despite his increasingly rare presence in Scotland. Since the late 1180s David had pursued a career as an English nobleman and perhaps had begun to see the future for his line as lying chiefly within the southern kingdom, where his most important properties were; his support for his brother in 1196–7 might have been intended to show where he believed his true future lay. It is likely too, however, that David's intimate knowledge of the personalities of both William and Richard led him to believe that the elaborate schemes for an alternative succession had little prospect of lasting success. When David returned to England at the end of the successful expedition into Caithness, he was perhaps confident that his eventual succession to the Scottish throne was secure.

Any such confidence lasted little more than a year, for by early 1198 it was clear that the queen was once more with child. In August, Ermengarde and her husband were at Haddington in East Lothian, probably awaiting her confinement in the royal manor there, which possibly had been assigned to her as part of her marriage portion; it had been one of the dower lands formerly held by William's mother, Countess Ada. There on St Bartholomew's Day (24 August) she was delivered of a son, who was soon afterwards baptised by Jocelin, bishop of Glasgow, with the name Alexander.[23] Last held within the royal house by William's great-uncle, King Alexander I, it is unknown why that name was chosen in preference to any of those borne within the child's direct male ancestry, or even that of his mother. According to one of the thirteenth-century chronicles incorporated into the fourteenth-century work attributed to John of Fordun, the birth and baptism were the cause of joy for many throughout Scotland, and continued to be celebrated for the hope which they brought for many years afterwards.[24] There were men, however, who did not share in the celebrations, Earl David perhaps included in their number; for the birth of the king's son placed another potential obstacle in the path to the throne which they believed was rightfully theirs.

To modern eyes, Alexander's eventual succession to his father might seem natural, conventional and uncontroversial. In early

thirteenth-century Scotland, however, inheritance by male primogeniture – succession by the first-born son – a tradition which had been introduced to the kingdom in the cultural baggage of the English and continental colonists who had begun to settle there in the 1100s, was not the universally established practice. It was, in truth, only a combination of individual ruthlessness and personal genetic accident which from the late eleventh century had kept the royal succession in Scotland within the lineage descended from King Malcolm III, but even that descent had been no straightforward father-to-son progression. Malcolm's own designated heir had not been Duncan, his elder son of his first marriage, but Edward, the eldest son of his second wife, St Margaret. When the king and his heir-designate were killed in 1093, the leading men of the kingdom turned against Malcolm's innovative plan to pass the throne directly to his son, reverting instead to the established Gaelic practice of succession by the eldest suitable male from within the wider royal kindred; his actual successor was his younger brother, King Donald III Bán.

In 1094 Malcolm's eldest son, Duncan, overthrew his uncle with English aid and ruled briefly as King Duncan II, but was killed within the year by Donald's supporters. Although Duncan had an infant son, William, the expediency of having an adult capable of leading the family against Donald saw the headship of Malcolm III's lineage pass to the next acceptable male, Edgar. On the unmarried Edgar's death in 1107, the throne passed to his next surviving brother, Alexander I, but his marriage proved childless and, although he had fathered one illegitimate son, Malcolm, the succession fell to his youngest remaining brother, David I. For the first decade of his reign, David faced serious challenges to his position as king from two quarters, both of which enjoyed strong support for their candidacy for the kingship. The more serious challenge was from the Moray-based descendents of Lulach, the stepson of King Macbeth, but the longer-lasting threat was from his elder brother's bastard, Malcolm. The latter enjoyed widespread support amongst the Gaelic political leadership of the kingdom and, although he was captured in 1134 and spent the rest of his life in captivity, his sons and descendents continued to present serious challenges to David and his grandsons into the 1150s.

For many men, particularly within the Gaelic heartland of Scotland, the bastard Malcolm and his line had been more acceptable as kings than David and his foreign ways. There was also a third potential challenger in the person of Duncan II's son William, who was already

a mature adult at the time of David's succession in 1124. His claim was strongest if primogeniture were applied – his father had been the oldest of all of Malcolm III's children – but it appears that he may have been won over by recognition of his status as David's heir-presumptive, at least until the king's own son, Henry, reached adulthood. Despite Henry's death in 1152, David's mastery of his kingdom was sufficiently strong for him to present his twelve-year-old eldest grandson, Malcolm, as his heir, passing over William's children. Again, however, men hostile to David's lineage both within and outwith Scotland, saw in the existence of the male descendents of this senior line of the royal kindred – known to history as the MacWilliams – serious contenders for the throne. From at least 1181 and perhaps as early as 1165,[25] they had mounted a series of bids for the kingship, which as recently as 1187 had forced William to lead major military expeditions into the north of his kingdom. Despite the defeat and death of the head of the MacWilliam kin, Donald, at the hands of the king's men in 1187, William knew that his rival's sons were still at large and probably gathering fresh support for a renewed challenge for the throne. It was into the midst of such turbulent uncertainty that Alexander was born.

William may have intended that his son should succeed him right from the moment he received news of his birth. However, the recent strong support from amongst his nobles for the rights of Earl David had shown how conservative many remained in respect of inheritance practice. In an age of high infant mortality, moreover, it would have been dangerous to risk creating a possible political crisis on the basis of one child's fragile life. His own views, however, were made clear within a year of Alexander's birth when, in April 1199, a succession crisis erupted within the Angevin domain; on his death-bed, Richard I had designated his youngest surviving brother, John, as his heir, disinheriting his nephew Arthur of Brittany, the son of their dead middle brother Geoffrey.[26] Although William's stance in the political turmoil and warfare that followed was essentially opportunistic – he saw in the disputed succession a realistic chance of regaining his long-desired patrimony – there are also glimpses of awareness of how important this dispute was in the growing legal debates surrounding the question of royal inheritance. William was torn between his obsessive ambition to recover Northumberland and Cumberland, and the need to support inheritance by primogeniture over collateral designation. In the end, he failed to achieve either goal.

In May 1199 William sent envoys south to England, where support for John was strong, to request restoration of the northern counties. In return, William would recognise John's right to the kingship and swear fealty to him.[27] Successful delaying tactics by John and his supporters prevented the formal presentation of William's claim until after John's coronation on 27 May, a *fait accompli* which significantly weakened the impact of the Scottish king's threat to transfer his support to Arthur.[28] John now called on the Scottish king to perform homage to him for his English lands, but William prevaricated and repeated the terms on which he would come to John. William, spurred on promises of French military backing for Arthur, and perhaps also a proposal that the infant Alexander could be betrothed to the French king's daughter, strengthened his demands, but John remained unmoved.[29] He now resorted to bluster, threatening to invade should John not do justice by him, but when John simply put his border castles in a state of defensive readiness and displayed his confidence in his northern nobles by leaving them and crossing to Normandy, William's resolve faltered and then failed when Arthur made peace with John.[30] Although Howden tells us that William's decision not to invade England was the result of a vision he had received at the tomb of his saintly ancestress, Margaret, at Dunfermline,[31] it is more likely that the evaporation of any possibility of aid from France and fear of a repetition of the disaster of 1174 panicked him. That previous invasion had ground to a halt before those same English castles and had ended in defeat, captivity and the long humiliation of the Falaise treaty. That was hardly the legacy which he wished to pass to his son.

Despite the collapse of his position, William resisted making any formal submission to John for over a year. Finally, a delegation led by Earl David came north with letters of safe-conduct for William and a summons for him to attend John at Lincoln to perform homage;[32] the man who was probably still William's presumed heir had clearly aligned himself with John. The reasons for David's opposition to his brother's stance are unknown, but it must be recognised that he was in a tremendously vulnerable position. In 1174, he had been stripped of the earldom of Huntingdon by Henry II and had spent the next decade based chiefly on the lands in Scotland that William had given him by way of compensation.[33] David's reinstatement as earl had come only after William's steady display of loyalty and subservience to Henry, and the position David had subsequently built for himself in England was founded equally on loyalty and service, first to Henry and then to Richard I. His marriage in 1190 to Matilda, sister of Ranulf de

Blundeville, earl of Chester, was a clear statement of his high favour with Richard, in whose hands the gift of her marriage lay, and he was to repay Richard with unswerving loyalty.[34] He had opposed John's attempted usurpation of the throne in 1193–4 and received further rewards for that loyalty; to turn against Richard's designated successor in 1199 would have been to risk all that he had gained. There was, moreover, the question of the Scottish succession, in which David's status closely resembled that of John, with Alexander as Arthur of Brittany. If primogeniture was to triumph over designation in respect of the English succession, what hope was there for David's position as heir-presumptive in Scotland? David's status and that of his heirs in future – either as kings of Scots or as English earls – depended on the maintenance of peaceful relations between the kingdoms. William had jeopardised all of that.

Accompanied by his leading counsellors and lords, William travelled to Lincoln and, outside the city on 21 November 1200, performed homage to John. Reminding John that he had promised to do justice to his claims once he had given his submission, William made a formal request for restoration of the northern English counties as 'his right and heritage', but the subsequent discussions were fruitless.[35] Further negotiations in early 1201 brought no resolution, John being more concerned with growing threats to his hold over his continental domain than with reaching a settlement with William, and judgement in the issue was deferred until September. When that deadline passed without any action by John, it was clear to William that the English king had no interest in reaching a settlement. Fast approaching his sixtieth year, William might finally have despaired of ever personally regaining the lands which he believed were his birthright, but now he was prepared to pass on his claim to the next generation by securing recognition of Alexander's hereditary rights as his legitimate son from the Scottish political community. On 12 October 1201 at Musselburgh, a great assembly of the nobles and prelates of the kingdom swore fealty to the three-year-old Alexander as William's heir.[36] This time, if there was any support voiced for Earl David's thirty-five year status as heir-presumptive, no surviving account records it.

Within weeks of the Musselburgh assembly, news reached Scotland of renewed war between John and the French king, who formally stripped him of his continental lands and titles and granted them to Arthur of Brittany. Any brief hope of a revival of earlier schemes to

offer Arthur his support in return for a cession of the northern English counties, however, was quickly dashed by reports of Arthur's capture by John. Ugly rumours followed of a drunken John murdering his nephew and disposing of his body – rumours which grew in strength as John failed to display his prisoner in public or even demonstrate that he was alive through the reports of credible witnesses.[37] It has been argued convincingly that the whispers surrounding Arthur's fate played on William's fears for the safety of his own young son, and perhaps drove a wedge between William and his younger brother; after all, if John had disposed of his elder brother's son to secure the throne for himself, might Earl David – John's close ally – not be encouraged to emulate him?[38] Such fears for the life of his son and for the security of Alexander's future succession were to mould William's policies and actions for the remainder of his life.

For the next four years, William's relationship with both his brother and King John remained in suspension whilst John battled in France to preserve the integrity of his continental domain. After the fall of Normandy to King Philip II of France in 1204, John had been based mainly in England whilst he attempted to gather his strength to launch a bid to regain his ancestral lands. Conscious of the many grievances that William had against him and mindful of previous Franco-Scottish dealings, John needed to be sure that William would not exploit his vulnerability during this critical time by advancing his claim to the northern counties once again. It was perhaps with this need in mind to keep William distracted that John sent Earl David to Scotland in 1205. There, possibly in a ceremony at Musselburgh, he at last gave homage to his seven-year-old nephew, signalling his formal recognition of Alexander's position as William's heir.[39] This submission may have helped to keep relations between William and John amicable through the summer of 1205 as the two kings began diplomatic discussions over the future status of the lands of the kings of Scots in England, possibly including a suggestion from William that the northern counties be restored but granted to Alexander. The negotiations, however, may have been linked more directly to David's homage and implicit acceptance of his relegation in the royal succession. Before the end of the year, William had received a safe-conduct from John for him to travel to York in February 1206 to conclude the negotiations, its terms accepting William's requirement that Earl David would be sent to Scotland and remain there for the duration of William's time in England.[40] This stipulation may be evidence for William's lingering distrust of his brother, but probably

more particularly of John, and seems to mark a growing paranoia on William's part over the security of the still under-age Alexander's succession. There is, however, no evidence to suggest that either he or his son were in any real danger of abduction or death, as John needed to keep Scotland neutral or supportive whilst he led his planned expedition to Poitou. The last thing the beleaguered English king wanted was any threat of war on his northern frontier.

From 1206 the relationship between William and John held secure, and there were even fresh and potentially productive discussions between the two men at Newcastle over the question of the northern counties, but all of this collapsed spectacularly in spring 1209.[41] Two main reasons have been offered for this sudden deterioration of affairs. The most common is that William had reacted adversely to the bishop of Durham's construction of a castle at Tweedmouth on the English side of the river opposite the main Scottish trading port at Berwick. Supposedly angered and alarmed by the threat that he felt it posed, he ordered his men to attack and destroy the unfinished building.[42] A second suggestion is that John had become aware that William was negotiating for the marriage of one of his daughters to a foreign power. Later sources suggest that this was Count Renaud of Boulogne (who was actually favourably inclined to John at that date but, unfortunately for these later rumour-mongers, already married) or, more likely, a member of the French royal family.[43] Despite the prominence given to it in medieval records and modern discussions, the Tweedmouth incident seems a minor issue, given the gravity of the diplomatic crisis which erupted. There is, however, greater evidence that William was involved in negotiations that might have been seen as threatening to John's position; John had heard rumours that William and King Philip of France were discussing the marriage of William's daughter. Philip was already involved in a major scandal with the pope for bigamy, so it is unlikely that he even considered the possibility of taking the young Scottish princess as a bride; but his younger son, also named Philip, may have been considered.[44] This younger Philip was later to be vested with the county of Boulogne by his father following Count Renaud's fall from favour, hence the later tradition of the possible betrothal of a count of Boulogne to Margaret. The suggestion of a French match had reached John between the end of the Newcastle meeting – when William had fallen ill and returned to Scotland at John's urging, where he held a council at Stirling to discuss the proposals which John had tabled – and the arrival at John's court of a Scottish delegation headed by William Malveisin,

bishop of St Andrews. In place of the friendliness with which William had been received at Newcastle, Malveisin was confronted with unconcealed hostility and sent scurrying back to Scotland with threats of an English invasion ringing in his ears.[45]

William's response suggests that he had indeed been involved in foreign negotiations, but these had resulted in no agreement; he had been found out but had failed to settle any alliance to lend him security against John's retribution, which was sure to follow. He fully expected an invasion of his kingdom, and therefore ordered the Scottish host to assemble and for his border castles to be readied to withstand siege, but he also sent a new delegation south to treat with John. At the same time, English emissaries had come north to set out John's demands directly before William: Alexander was to be surrendered to John as a hostage and, as in the aftermath of 1174, key royal castles were to be placed in John's hands. William was so alarmed by those terms that he at once dismissed his gathering army – a gesture surely intended to reassure John of his good faith – and sent a second delegation hurrying south to plead for peace before the first had returned from the English court.[46] Soon after its departure the first mission reported back with news that the English king was advancing towards Scotland with his army, forcing William to issue a fresh military summons. With his kingdom made vulnerable by his indecisiveness, William had no real alternative but to treat for peace. In late July 1209 the negotiations which had begun at Newcastle in the early months of the year were resumed between the kings in the bishop of Durham's castle at Norham. At Newcastle, John had been prepared to make concessions to keep the peace with William; at Norham it was very clear that the English king was in a position to dictate almost whatever terms he wished, and a treaty had been confirmed and implemented by the middle of August.

In accordance with the Anglo-Scottish treaty agreed at York in 1237, all copies of the 1209 treaty were surrendered to the Scots for destruction. Consequently, no full and contemporary text of the Norham agreement survives, but its general tenor can be reconstructed from chronicle accounts of the negotiations.[47] The settlement, described by the English chronicler Roger of Wendover as a 'treaty of friendship',[48] was in reality a reimposition of the superior lordship over Scotland exercised by Henry II and Richard I under the terms of the Treaty of Falaise. William had secured peace, but at the cost of a cash payment of between 9,000 and 15,000 merks (the figure

varies between chronicle accounts), and the handing over to John of the princesses Margaret and Isabella, as well as hostages drawn from the leading noble families of Scotland.[49] In an indication that John was convinced of William's use of his daughters as bargaining chips in his foreign diplomacy, John obtained from him what had been probably the main objective behind his aggression: the concession that John could arrange their marriages, a blow somewhat sweetened by the proposal that Margaret would marry John's infant son Henry and that Isabella would be found a suitable – but unspecified – English nobleman as a husband. Such was the importance of this arrangement that John required and had obtained the handing over of the girls to his representatives at Carlisle by 16 August.[50] There were some concessions to the Scots: Scottish merchants were confirmed in the right to trade freely in England, a clause perhaps intended to make it easier for William to persuade his wealthier subjects to contribute towards the cash payment which he had promised John; and the arrangements for how kings of Scots were to be conducted and maintained during their visits to the English court were also confirmed. It is likely that the question of the Scottish king's English lands was also dealt with in the treaty, probably activating the agreement that had been negotiated back in 1205 but left unimplemented on account of William's insistence on including the northern counties in its terms.[51] In 1205, William had perhaps proposed that John should grant Northumberland and Cumberland to Alexander as a means of resolving the long-running dispute; in 1209 all suggestion of such a solution had been dropped from the treaty. Instead, its terms dealt only with the lands which William still held in England. He was to surrender these to John, who in turn would regrant them to Alexander, to be held by him as heir of Scotland, and so to be held by future heirs and not the reigning Scottish king. For his part, Alexander and his heirs would perform homage and fealty to English kings specifically for those lands.[52] Again, such was the importance of the personal lordship which this arrangement gave John over the Scottish heir that Alexander performed his homage to the English king at Alnwick before John and his army withdrew southwards in mid-August.[53] It can be assumed that John was well satisfied with all that he gained at Norham: an end to prospective foreign alliances secured by the marriages of William's daughters; physical possession of those daughters and the right to arrange their marriages; the personal homage of William's male heir; hostages from amongst the children of William's chief nobles; and a substantial

tribute in silver to fill his depleted coffers and fund his efforts to regain his ancestral domain in France.

Following Norham, John's domination of the whole of the British Isles was approaching its zenith. Such was William's desire to ingratiate himself with John that when in 1210 the disgraced Hugh de Lacy, earl of Ulster, and members of the de Briouze family who were fleeing from the English king landed in Scotland, most of the refugees were detained and then surrendered to John.[54] There could be no clearer demonstration of the effectiveness of John's mastery over the aged William. It is perhaps no coincidence that it was at this juncture that the next generation of the Scottish king's MacWilliam rivals mounted their bid to unseat him, capitalising on the blow to William's prestige and personal authority that the capitulation at Norham had caused. In 1211 Godred, son of Donald MacWilliam, backed by a force of Scottish and Irish warriors, raised a rebellion in Ross that quickly attracted widespread support through the northern part of the kingdom.[55] Such was the seriousness of the situation that William was forced to take the field in person, leading the second of two expeditions sent north to quell the insurrection, and ordering the construction of two new castles to control the routes into Ross across the Beauly and Cromarty firths.[56] Although Godred's army had been defeated before the end of 1211, he eluded capture, and it was perhaps William's anxiety over the political consequences of a protracted conflict that in 1212 drove him to turn to John for aid. English assistance, however, came at a price.

On 2 February 1212 William, accompanied by Queen Ermengarde, met John at Durham. With the queen acting as a mediator, new terms were settled between the two kings that went much further than what had been agreed at Norham. Although some doubt has been cast on the authenticity of the surviving English exchequer copy of the agreement, which dates from sometime in the 1230s and may have been drafted in connection with Anglo-Scottish treaty negotiations in 1236–7, the Durham deal has usually been seen in terms of a further humiliation for the Scots and often been presented as a key component in the bitter resentment of John which Alexander was to display once he had succeeded to the throne.[57] At face value there is much to justify that view, for not only had William granted John the right to arrange his daughters' marriages and given him custody of Alexander's sisters, but now he also gave him the right to arrange the thirteen-year-old Alexander's own marriage within six years. In effect,

John was now in a position to shape the dynastic future of the entire Scottish royal family. But there were other elements to the Durham settlement which indicate that it was not an entirely one-sided agreement, and that John was also seeking reassurances and more personal benefits to safeguard the future of his own kingship. Both men agreed to lend whatever support was necessary to maintain the other in his 'just quarrels', a clause certainly designed to provide William with English aid to suppress the MacWilliam-led insurrection in northern Scotland, but also framed by John with a backwards glance at the mounting political tension in England. John was, too, faced with a need to secure Scottish support in the various conflicts which were disturbing the western and northern limits of his own kingdom in Ireland. That Alan, lord of Galloway, distant cousin of John, William's hereditary constable and son-in-law of Earl David, was the sole Scottish oath-taker to uphold the treaty suggests that he may have had a significant influence in framing its terms.[58] Master of a large fleet of galleys and with ambitions to extend his power across the Irish Sea into Ulster and north into the Hebrides, Alan was no mere tool in the power-play between William and John, but was perhaps to direct to his own advantage Scottish policy in the Atlantic west for the best part of the next two decades. The clause, however, went further than simple military assistance in 'quarrels', making both men promise that the survivor would do everything in his power to ensure the succession of the other's son in his kingdom.[59] William now had John's personal guarantee that it would be Alexander and no other who would, if necessary, receive English support to secure the throne after him, a condition perhaps directed as much against Earl David as against what William seemed to have regarded as a very real possibility of MacWilliam success. But, again, it was not only William who had sought such security, for John, mindful of how he had gained the crown of England and, perhaps, of the royal blood spilled to secure that prize, was as fearful for the safety of his young son Henry as William had been for Alexander. With the treaty settled, the focus of William's energies returned to the conflict with his dynastic rivals.

It was perhaps William's intention that his son would gain his first personal experience of command in warfare in this campaign, but he had first to receive his knighthood. Alexander had probably travelled south with John after his formal giving of homage and fealty at Alnwick, for on 4 March he was knighted by the king during festivities held at the guesthouse of the great London priory of St Brides, Clerkenwell.[60] The boy Alexander, described in one English chronicle

as but 'small of stature, yet dignified and of amiable appearance', had gone through his first rite of passage, leaving behind his childhood and entering the adult male chivalric elite.[61] He may have returned north with the contingent of John's Brabantine mercenaries which the English king sent to honour his promise to give real aid to William in his just quarrels, but there is no surviving contemporary evidence that Alexander led them into the Highlands in pursuit of Godred MacWilliam. The 'certain English noble' whom John placed in command of the mercenaries might have been Saher de Quincy, earl of Winchester, who was also an important tenant-in-chief of the Scottish king.[62] According to the fifteenth-century account of Walter Bower, based on now lost thirteenth-century sources, Godred's support had been dwindling since his defeat by William's army in 1211, and early in 1212 he was betrayed to the king's men by some of his own followers, carried south to Kincardine Castle in the Mearns where Alexander was based, and swiftly executed there.[63] The death of the MacWilliam claimant, however, did not end the threat from that lineage and, as events at the outset of Alexander's reign were to demonstrate, there was still a reservoir of support for the family in the northern parts of the kingdom.

The ending of the current MacWilliam insurrection occurred within the context of wider warfare in Ulster and the Hebrides. These conflicts were linked directly to John's action against Hugh de Lacy in 1210, which had destabilised the military balance in the north of Ireland that the earl of Ulster had maintained against his long-term rival, the powerful Gaelic Irish ruler Áed Méith ua Néill, king of Cenél nEógain. Áed may have been the source of the Irish warriors who are reported to have fought for Godred in 1211,[64] but he posed a more immediate threat to the security of English-held eastern Ulster. That Alan of Galloway received lordship from John over a great swathe of territory extending down the Antrim coast around the time of the Durham negotiations points directly to the 'just quarrel' in which John wanted aid.[65] Alan's power and influence was swiftly brought to bear on Áed, with Alan's brother Thomas, earl of Atholl, and his allies amongst the Mhic Somhairle kindred, ravaging the lands of the Cenél nEógain.[66] It was possibly as a consequence of their actions that Godred was deprived of any chance of reinforcements from Ireland, thereby hastening the end of his adventure. Rather than being a one-sided imposition which further undermined the prestige of the Scottish king and compromised the future independence of his son, William's deal with John had produced positive results for all the

principal parties involved. In the midst of these operations, William met again with John, perhaps to discuss the progress of the offensive actions against the MacWilliams and in Ulster, the two men travelling together across northern England from Carlisle to Durham.[67] Unfortunately, the amicable relations which had yielded such a good outcome in 1212 were short-lived, and within a year William and John were again at loggerheads.

This rapid collapse in Anglo-Scottish relations was a direct consequence of the deteriorating political situation in England, where John's efforts to regain his continental territories were placing increasingly oppressive burdens on his people and stirring up baronial opposition. A leading figure amongst John's opponents was William's son-in-law Eustace de Vescy, and when his involvement in a plot against the English king was exposed in 1212 he sought refuge in Scotland. De Vescy's complicity in the conspiracy and seizure of his Northumberland estates was one matter that brought John north in January 1213, but William's harbouring of him in Scotland, in what John must have seen as a clear breach of the promises of mutual support in the Durham accord, was perhaps the principal factor. From Norham, John sent messengers to William summoning him to a face-to-face interview or, in acknowledgement of the elderly king's ill-health, requiring him to send Alexander in his place. Suspecting that John would probably detain Alexander until Eustace had been handed over to him, William's councillors refused to permit him to send his heir to the meeting.[68] A further concern was surely William's by then chronic ill-health, which appears to have prostrated him for most of 1213 either in his sick-bed or convalescing from bouts of more severe illness.[69] That he might die whilst his heir was absent from the kingdom was a very real possibility and, given that members of the MacWilliam kindred were still at large, the consequences of any hiatus in the transition of kingship from William to Alexander were potentially catastrophic. Ignoring John's threats and bluster, the Scots refused to answer his summons and continued to offer de Vescy shelter. With the political temperature in the south of his kingdom reaching boiling point, John was eventually forced to withdraw southwards empty-handed. William had perhaps restored some of his personal dignity after his capitulations in 1209 and 1212, and done what he felt was necessary to safeguard his heir, but at the cost of angering the volatile and increasingly desperate John. Preoccupied with containing the political opposition of his barons and in strengthening the prospects of his own young son's eventual accession

to the English throne, and ill-disposed towards William and Alexander, it is little wonder that John did nothing further to honour his side of the 1209 and 1212 treaties. Although the heat was for a time taken out of the dispute between John and his barons when the king submitted to Pope Innocent III in May 1213 and accepted his kingdom as a papal fief, as part of which settlement John was required to restore Eustace to his forfeited estates, there was no full reconciliation between the kings. Four years after they had been handed over to John by their father, Margaret and Isabella remained unbetrothed, while the question of the Scottish king's lands in England had been brought no closer to a resolution. Although William and his lords' obstinacy in 1213 had contributed directly to this state of affairs, the Scots were justifiably aggrieved that after so much time, and in spite of the substantial cash payment made to secure the treaties, John had broken his word.

By the end of 1213, William's health had to a degree recovered, perhaps aided by the ministration of his physicians, Masters Martin and Ralph, who had attended their master since he had fallen ill at Traquair in January.[70] The king, however, was approaching seventy, and the increasing frequency with which his illnesses afflicted him left both William and those around him sure that his end was approaching. It was in that context that the old king prepared for his soul's future salvation by granting a series of new gifts and confirmations of earlier grants to the great monastery of Tironensian monks that he had founded at Arbroath,[71] in which he intended to be buried. Having received his knighthood in 1212 and seen his first involvement in the great affairs of state with the execution of Godred MacWilliam, it is also unsurprising that Alexander began to play a more prominent role in royal administration as his father's health began to fail. From February 1213, aged nearly fifteen, he began to witness royal acts and attend important meetings of the king's council, such as the one at which the succession to the earldom of Menteith was settled.[72] These preparations may, however, have seemed somewhat premature, for in summer 1214 William was well enough to travel to a meeting with Earl Jón of Caithness and Orkney to agree a final resolution to a conflict which had destabilised the north of his kingdom for much of his reign.[73] On 17 August, William was at Elgin in Moray,[74] from where he made a long, slow return to the south of the kingdom. Worn out by the rigours of the expedition, when he reached Stirling in early September he could travel no further.[75] He lingered for a further three months until at last, on the night of 4

December, attended by Ermengarde, Alexander and many of his closest advisors and servants, he died.[76]

TWO

The Fox-Cub and the Old Lion

All transitions are times of uncertainty and in early thirteenth-century Scotland the death of a king and enthronement of his successor represented particularly perilous times. Without an enthroned king, all the delegated authority, all the stability brought by the 'peace' which the king's person demanded in his realm, went into suspension; a quick transition was therefore vital for the good government of the realm and the maintenance of peace and law. Although it was widely acknowledged amongst the political community that the Lord Alexander, as only legitimate son of the old king, was his chosen heir, there were still rivals abroad who possessed unquestionably strong claims to the throne. Such men had no doubt been able to prepare their challenge during what was surely William's long, lingering last illness, and were poised to seize the opportunity presented by the brief window of time between his death and the inauguration of the new king to stage their own bid for the ultimate prize. It was also a time of uncertainty for the wider community of the realm; for nearly fifty years the kingdom had been ruled by one man and there were few people alive in 1214 who could remember any other king. While his heir was well known to the tight circle of nobles, clergy and senior officials clustered around the royal court, Alexander would have been an unknown quantity to most; he was still little more than a boy, albeit one groomed since birth to hold the kingship. Alexander may have been the accepted heir for that small political elite who had held high positions and power under the old king, and who looked to this youth for a continuation of that status quo, but for the majority of the Scottish people it probably mattered little who occupied the throne, provided he brought peace, prosperity and stability. To them, it might not have mattered whether that king were the son of William or a MacWilliam. To the high clergy of the kingdom, the bishops and abbots of the great monasteries who had been tireless propagators of the legitimacy of the ruling line and promoters of the idea of the king of Scots as the rightful king over all of the northern mainland of Britain, and who in return looked to the king for protection and advancement, continuity was also imperative. Thus, as the old king breathed his last in his chamber at Stirling Castle, in the pre-dawn hours of 4 December 1214 what was surely a long-prepared plan was

brought into action. The reign of Alexander II was beginning.

Early on the morning following William's death, the thirteenth-century chronicle incorporated into the *Gesta Annalia* portion of the fourteenth-century work attributed to John of Fordun reports that Alexander took his leave of his mother, who remained at Stirling with the bishop of Glasgow, the bishop-elect of Ross, and William del Bois the chancellor, to make preparations for the dead king's funeral, and rode to the inauguration place of the Scottish kings at Scone. In his company was Malcolm, earl of Fife, the man whose right it was to enthrone him, the earls of Angus, Atholl, Buchan, Dunbar and Menteith, and William Malveisin, bishop of St Andrews, the most senior cleric in the kingdom.[77] That so large a concourse of the great men of the realm were on hand to accompany him so quickly to his enthronement tells us surely that this was a long-anticipated and pre-prepared event. There had been time for them to set everything in readiness whilst William sank deeper into his long decline; others, it might be feared, had been equally active. To modern eyes, the dash to Scone to inaugurate Alexander as king might seem like unseemly haste. Indeed, the body of the old king was hardly cold when the party had left Stirling, but it was essential to pre-empt any challenge to Alexander's position by giving him the personal authority which inauguration as king would bring.[78] On Friday 5 December, surrounded by his lords, the youthful Lord Alexander was led to the inauguration stone on the Moot Hill at Scone and there, acclaimed by all, was enthroned by Earl Malcolm as King Alexander II.[79]

For three days the new king remained at Scone Abbey for the dignified festivities which celebrated his inauguration and symbolised the dignity and generosity that he would be expected to display as ruler. His uncle, Earl David, arrived at Scone on the second day of the festivities. Presumably alerted to his brother's probably terminal decline, he had travelled north from his English Midlands base but had managed neither to reach Stirling before William's death nor arrive in time for his nephew's enthronement.[80] On 8 December, he travelled with Alexander the short distance down the River Tay to the bridge at Perth, and at the bridge-end he met the cortege bearing William's body for burial at Arbroath. There David joined the bier-bearers and carried the dead king's body for a short distance in the procession from the bridge to a boundary point, possibly at the end of the burgh of Perth's territory, where a commemorative cross was subsequently erected. The chronicle accounts describe David as 'not of

active mind and physically decrepit', the fifteenth-century Pluscarden abbreviation of Bower adding 'for ruling the kingdom', implying that it was his poor health which prevented him from taking up the regency for his still under-age nephew.[81] From there, Alexander accompanied the procession to the abbey where, with his uncle as chief mourner, William was interred on 10 December before the high altar of the church upon which he had founded and lavished so much of his wealth.[82] Leaving Arbroath, Alexander moved inland to the royal castle at Forfar, where he held his first Christmas court as king attended by his greatest nobles and the men who had been his father's closest councillors. But this was no holiday period, for Alexander was already alive to the potential challenges which might yet be made to his new kingship, and to developing opportunities to be exploited, and he was keen to place his own stamp firmly upon the conduct of policy. As Keith Stringer has emphasised, however, kings of Scots were 'obliged to rule by consultation'[83] and, despite the experience he had gained since 1212, Alexander was only sixteen and needed the advice of older heads to counsel him more wisely rather than simply follow where his own teenage impulses were driving him.

By Epiphany (6 January 1215) he was back at Stirling and proceeded from there to Edinburgh for a colloquium of his nobles, officers of state and councillors whom he had summoned there, at which he confirmed in their offices the men who had held high position in William's administration. Many of these men had held office since the dark days of 1174, some indeed from the very start of William's reign.[84] A group of young nobles who had been associated with Alexander during the last years of his father's life, headed by Walter Comyn, the ambitious son of William, earl of Buchan, did succeed in making the transition from friends of the prince to councillors of the king. Nevertheless, although the English chronicler Walter of Coventry alluded to the youth of the Scottish king and some of his associates,[85] these young men were not in control of Scottish policy. As the names of the men who witnessed Alexander's charters issued in the early months of his reign demonstrate, the king's council was dominated by a group who had gained the greatest experience of Anglo-Scottish diplomacy in recent decades. Their continued presence, however, was not necessarily any guarantee of a long-term maintenance of the peace with John, for many shared with their king personal grievances against the English king, often arising from frustrated property claims. Into the early months of 1215, however, continuity of council and policy was very much the order of the day,

and it was perhaps on this account that certain unnamed malcontents soon afterwards removed themselves from the king's court at Haddington; some amongst Alexander's nobles were looking in a different direction, and the young king was inclined to follow their gaze.

Since the stand-off with John in 1213, the Scots had watched as the tension in England between John and many of his barons edged towards an open rupture. Alexander had probably been well informed of English affairs by his brother-in-law, Eustace de Vescy, during the latter's period of exile in Scotland, and in the first weeks of his reign by Earl David. His uncle was steering a cautious course between John and his enemies, trying to continue the recovery of royal favour which had been badly damaged by William's defiance in 1213 but also maintain good relations with his friends, kinsmen and vassals who were prominent in the baronial opposition.[86] David had struggled since the 1190s to maintain the peace between the two kingdoms, probably more from self-interest than any altruism, for conflict threatened his position, on the one hand, as an English magnate if he maintained his allegiance to the English king, and on the other risked his standing in Scotland if he aligned himself with John. The personal vigour and political decisiveness that had characterised his actions in earlier decades were – if the descriptions of his physical and mental state in 1214 are accurate – long gone and he was now, like his elder brother had been, an aged and anxious father seeking to secure the inheritance of his one surviving legitimate son, the nine-year-old John. While David may have tried to dissuade his nephew from any precipitate action and alignment with the baronial opposition in England, his advice might only have helped to convince Alexander all the more that a real opportunity had opened to at last secure the lost patrimony which his father had struggled for nearly sixty years to regain. Further pressure was brought to bear on Alexander in the first months of 1215 when Eustace and a second leading figure of the baronial party, Saher de Quincy, earl of Winchester, came north to court his aid. On 1 March 1215, Eustace was in attendance on Alexander at the royal castle of Clunie in Stormont, east of Dunkeld, in a gathering which included a number of Scottish lords who also had unsettled grievances against King John.[87] A month later, Earl Saher was at Alexander's court in Edinburgh, and around the same time another baronial malcontent with Scottish connections, Robert de Vere, earl of Oxford, also came north.[88] When Eustace and his other brother-in-law Robert de Ros renounced their allegiance to John in

the early spring of 1215 and led most of the baronage of northern England into open revolt, however, no Scottish army marched south in their support. Alexander and his councillors were still waiting to see what John might concede in his desperation to maintain his shaky hold on the English throne, but it is likely that the young Scottish king had already determined on a bold strategy to win what was his by birthright, should John offer no satisfactory reward.

Immediate Scottish involvement in the civil war in England was prevented by the eruption of the probably long-anticipated MacWilliam challenge in the north. The new MacWilliam head-of-kin, Donald Bán, supported by one Kenneth MacHeth, who was possibly a claimant to the earldom of Ross which his kin had held in the mid-twelfth century, and accompanied by 'the son of a certain king of Ireland', launched an attack on the king's men in Moray and Ross.[89] The speed with which their insurrection was crushed perhaps lends this event an air of inconsequence in retrospect, but given the experience of previous MacWilliam risings it is unlikely that Alexander treated it with anything other than his full attention. In mid-June, Alexander was on his way north to deal with the crisis when he was met by a Gaelic chieftain from Ross named Ferchar MacTaggart, who had defeated the king's enemies and who now presented him with their heads. Ferchar symbolised how far the political settlement of the northern Highlands had changed since the suppression of Godred MacWilliam's rising in 1211, with Scottish control of the region more firmly entrenched through the establishment of new castles and lordships from the Aird west of Inverness to south-eastern Sutherland, and with the MacWilliam's long-time patrons, the earls of Caithness and Orkney, neutralised by Earl Jón's 1214 settlement with William.[90] Ferchar may have been representative of the kind of men who had given their support to earlier pretenders, but by 1215 he could see clearly where the future lay. Indeed, he may already have harboured ambitions to extend his power as a key agent of royal power in the region.[91] In turn, Alexander recognised the potential in Ferchar and, to identify him more clearly as the king's man and a pivotal element in the new prescription of power in the north, rewarded him with a knighthood.[92] Now the young king was free to turn his attention south.

It must have seemed to Alexander that his opportunity to capitalise on John's difficulties had slipped away from him when he received news that the English king had yielded to his barons and set his seal to

Magna Carta at Runnymede on the same day that Ferchar had delivered to him the heads of his defeated enemies. He and his councillors had perhaps planned to use the threat of intervention on the side of the rebels, rather than actual military action, as a lever to extract concessions from John in respect of the northern counties. Others, however, had been working on the Scottish king's behalf, and Alexander's interests were well represented in the deliberations of both the baronial opposition in England and in the circle around John. Not only were his brothers-in-law leading members of the barons, but his constable, Alan of Galloway, and Alan's younger brother Thomas, earl of Atholl, were being courted on account of the military resources they could deploy if called upon. John was keen to draw these distant cousins to his side should open civil war erupt, and through the early months of 1215 he had directed a stream of patronage towards the brothers. Alan, whilst remaining uncommitted militarily to the English king, was involved heavily on John's behalf in the negotiations that led to the drawing up of Magna Carta, and was with John at Windsor by 3 June.[93] In the preamble to the charter which enshrined the concessions that John made to the rebels, Alan was named as one of the lords on whose advice the king had yielded, while amongst the baronial leadership were Alexander's two brothers-in-law and also Earl Saher. The prominence of these men in the negotiations probably ensured the inclusion amongst Magna Carta's clauses (no. 59) of a promise specifically to do justice by the king of Scots.[94] By this, John promised that he

would treat with Alexander concerning his sisters, the return of hostages, and his liberties and rights in the same manner as he will act towards our other barons of England, unless it ought to be otherwise because of the charters which we have from King William his father; and this shall be determined by the judgement of his peers in our court.[95]

There is a wide range of historical opinion regarding the significance of this clause, and in recent years it has been on the one hand dismissed as simply another manifestation of the 'judicial highhandedness' which characterised John's attitudes towards his opponents, while on the other it has been seen as a sober recognition of the justification of Alexander's sense of grievance. In the weeks that followed the granting of Magna Carta, John's friendly gestures towards a number of Scottish nobles and confirmations of the various substantial grants of land and offices which he had made to Alan and

Thomas in Ulster do seem to suggest that he was making a firm effort at conciliation.[96] Nevertheless, while they can be seen as part of the general process of reconciliation between the king and his erstwhile opponents that followed Runnymede, the generously revised conditions of tenure which he gave to Alan and Thomas suggests that he was still courting the Galloway brothers with other ideas in mind.[97] Alexander, however, was prepared to accept the concessions at face value, reassured perhaps by what seemed to be the collapse of John's position in England and the apparent total triumph of the baronial opposition. Believing that a resolution was at hand to his grievances, old and new, in early July Alexander notified John that he was sending his envoys south to treat directly with him.[98] Before they had even arrived at Oxford in mid-July for the council at which John and his barons were to continue their negotiations, it was evident that John had no intention of keeping his word over Magna Carta. The king was already laying the ground at Rome to secure the agreement of his nominal overlord, the pope, for the charter's repudiation, while at the same time gathering around him his military resources. His avid courting of the lord of Galloway and the earl of Atholl now also became transparent; he wanted the manpower that Alan and Thomas could bring into the conflict which was sure to follow. His efforts, however, were in vain, for when John, having received the papal agents' categorical denunciation of the June settlement imposed on him by the barons, renounced Magna Carta on 5 September 1215, the Galloway brothers demonstrated that their allegiance lay with Alexander II, who had immediately declared his backing for the English barons.[99]

On receiving news of the outbreak of civil war in England, Alexander probably at once summoned his host in preparation for an autumn campaign. Caution, however, perhaps tempered by the council of men who had memories of how a similar involvement in a previous English internal conflict had started with supreme confidence of easy victory and ended in abject failure and humiliation, led the Scots to prepare the ground better before any army crossed the border. There were serious considerations to be weighed: John still commanded formidable military resources, and many English nobles who might not have any personal liking of their king were also not prepared to take up arms against him; military victory over him was therefore far from certain. Perhaps more important in Scottish calculations was the support which John had received from the pope, for to take up arms against the English king was to defy the will of the

man recognised as Christ's Vicar on Earth.[100] The consequences of such a course were clearly to be seen: the pope's representatives in England had already pronounced banns of excommunication against the baronial leadership. For the Scots, who had been successful in recent decades at winning papal support in the long-running dispute over the claims by generations of archbishops of York to metropolitan supremacy over the bishops of Scotland, defiance of Pope Innocent risked a reversal of all that had been gained in that conflict.[101] Still more horrifying was the prospect of a spiritual interdict against the king, his supporters and, possibly, even extended to the kingdom in general. This would suspend all religious life in Scotland, halting the fundamental routine of daily spiritual practice and exposing to the risk of eternal damnation the souls of all who died outside the embrace of the Church. For a youth like Alexander, the threat of death and damnation might have seemed an acceptable risk to take, but for the old men who counselled him, the consequences of excommunication must have weighed heavily in their deliberations.

Pushing Alexander towards active commitment in the field was the fact that the majority of the noblemen of northern England had renounced their allegiance to John and declared their support for the baronial cause. While the major fortresses of northern Yorkshire and of the north-east – Norham, Bamburgh, Newcastle and Durham – remained securely in the hands of royal agents, the baronial castles against which William's onslaught of 1173–4 had failed – Alnwick, Prudhoe, Wark-on-Tweed and many others of first-rate quality – were controlled by John's enemies. In the north-west, John's position was more exposed, for Carlisle Castle and the sheriffdom of Cumberland were held by Robert de Ros, and all the other major strongholds of Cumberland, save Cockermouth, were in the hands of the barons. In Westmorland, however, John's loyal lieutenant Robert de Vieuxpont had garrisoned Appleby and Brough castles, which controlled the Stainmore route across the Pennines, and was hastily strengthening the defences of Brougham, which dominated the intersection of the major routeways of the region at the crossing of the River Eamont.[102] There was also favourable news from further south, where risings in support of John's opponents were erupting across the Midlands and south of the kingdom; dealing with these would prevent John from concentrating his power for an offensive against the rebel power base in the north. It has also been suggested that the rebels had, as a further incentive, offered to subsidise the cost of Alexander's campaign, but it is unclear if they had deposited sufficient sums of

money with the Knights Templar in London towards this expense.[103] De Vieuxpont apart, if Alexander chose to invade in alliance with the rebels he could push his forces deep into the northern counties without serious threat of challenge from the garrisons of the king's castles or from any substantial royal army.

Although it has been said that John's actions in September 1215 presented Alexander with a 'stark choice of utter humiliation or armed intervention',[104] he also still had the option to delay commitment to either side. Past experience perhaps told Alexander and his councillors that John might yield much to win a quick peace, only to renege on his promises once he had re-established his control, but in the weeks since mid-June he had shown marked goodwill towards the Scots and done much to offer real hopes that he might this time honour his agreements. A final tipping of the balance in Alexander's deliberations towards commitment to the baronial cause came when the baronial leadership promised to give him immediately everything that John, for his part, was prepared only to give a promise to put to the judgement of his court. As the inventory of items found in the Scottish royal archive by Edward I's representatives in the 1280s reveals, the barons conceded much in their desperation to secure Alexander's active intervention on their side.[105] Although the documents to which the frustratingly brief headings in the inventory refer are now lost, it appears that in addition to promises concerning the marriages of Alexander's sisters and, possibly, of the king himself, the barons offered Alexander possession of the northern counties. With everything that his father had for so long sought now tantalisingly within his grasp, Alexander came down at last on the side of the rebels. On 19 October, the Scottish army encamped before the walls of Norham Castle and settled down to besiege the northernmost outpost of John's power.

Four days into the siege, Eustace de Vescy, accompanied by the rebel northern barons, came to Alexander at Felton in Northumberland to confirm him in possession of everything that he had been promised. In a ceremony witnessed by Alexander's lords, Eustace vested him with the northern counties and handed him a staff to symbolise seisin, whereupon the northern barons performed homage to him as their lord.[106] Letters that survived in the Scottish royal records until 1296 set out exactly what had been agreed: Northumberland, Cumberland and Westmorland had been adjudged as Alexander's by right; the city of Carlisle was to be placed in his hands;

and the communities of the three northern counties were instructed to obey Alexander. These instructions came from the Committee of Twenty-Five, the baronial body set up to ensure that the aspirations expressed in Magna Carta were put into effect. In its actions, it presented itself as the defender of the collective rights and liberties of the kingdom against a tyrannical king, and as taking whatever steps were necessary to maintain those rights and liberties.[107] As such, it could not preside over the dismemberment of the same kingdom and, while they had adjudged the northern counties to be Alexander's rightful heritage, it was intended that he would hold them as a baron of England and not as king of Scots. This was almost certainly not what Alexander had aspired to, but it was a first step towards a greater goal and he accepted it as such.

Perhaps within days of the Felton ceremony, Alexander received news that transformed the situation. Despairing of any lasting agreement being reached with John, the Committee of Twenty-Five had offered the English throne to the French Dauphin, Louis, the son and heir of King Philip II, and the prince had accepted the offer.[108] The Twenty-Five had not arrived lightly at that decision, the chronicler Roger of Wendover reporting that they had considered alternatives – possibly, as suggested by Keith Stringer, including Alexander of Scotland.[109] The Scottish king might indeed have been the preferred choice for many of the northern barons, such as Eustace de Vescy and Robert de Ros, but there were many more who had lost extensive estates in Normandy, Maine and Anjou when much of John's continental domain had been seized by Philip II, and for whom a French choice offered hopes of a restoration of their heritage. It was, however, irrelevant whom they selected as their candidate for the English throne since, by offering the crown to a member of a foreign family which had a long history of rivalry with England's Norman and Angevin kings, they had changed the nature of the civil war from a constitutional struggle waged in the name of the rights and liberties of the whole community of the kingdom into a straightforward inter-dynastic conflict. By this action, the baronial committee had weakened rather than strengthened their cause, for there were many waverers who had serious qualms about any action which went beyond a challenge to John's personal rule and disinherited his young and blameless son, Henry.

It may have seemed to Alexander that the vision of a French ascendancy which reached from the Tweed to the Mediterranean was

little different from the Angevin 'empire' that John had inherited and ruled over until 1204. French commitment to the war against John, however, may have spurred Alexander to aspire for greater lordship in northern England than the Twenty-Five's judgement had conceded to him; what else might Louis give to secure his more active commitment in the field against John? In similar circumstances in the late 1130s and 1140s, Alexander's great-grandfather David I had converted possession of the northern districts of England from tenure as a baron of the English king into effective annexation of the region to his own kingdom.[110] It is likely that Alexander at least entertained the thought that he might achieve a similar result.[111] Ambition, however, was one thing; tangible success upon which to found such an outcome was an entirely different matter, and Alexander knew that he had to give a clear display of his military power and lordly authority if he were to secure the lasting loyalty of the northern barons. With his army tied down in the siege of Norham, opportunities to make such demonstrations were few.

With winter fast approaching, Alexander opted to make one dramatic gesture of his intentions before deteriorating weather put an end to campaigning for the year. The duration of the campaign thus far indicates that he was not dependent on the traditional service dues owed to the king of Scots by all his free tenants – the 'common army' service of the men from the culturally Gaelic regions north of the River Forth, and the knight-service owed to him by those lords who held their lands by 'feudal' tenures – but, as the barons' commitment to pay for the costs of his expedition show, a significant portion of his army was probably receiving daily wages. Until payment was received from the Twenty-Five, however, the cost of maintaining an army in the field had to be borne by Alexander, and a long and unproductive siege must have seemed hardly a good return for such an outlay. Like his father and uncles before him, moreover, Alexander was keen to win chivalric renown in battle, something that the long attrition of a castle siege was unlikely to bring. After forty days encamped before Norham, therefore, Alexander granted the beleaguered garrison a truce and marched his army south.[112] He pushed unopposed the length of Northumberland to Newcastle. The castle there, with its great donjon built for Henry II, was too strong and well-garrisoned to be taken, so he contented himself with plundering and burning the adjacent town before withdrawing.[113] It was at least a positive note on which to end the year's military operations, giving his men some renewed confidence and booty after the fruitless deadlock outside the

walls of Norham. They would need that boost to face the storm which was soon to be unleashed upon Scotland.

At the end of 1215, John gathered his strength, including a large force of Brabantine mercenaries, and marched north. By 4 January 1216 he was at York, from where he directed operations against a number of baronial strongholds in the north and east of the county. Carlisle, too, which had been adjudged to Alexander the previous October, also fell, surrendered without resistance by Robert de Ros. Surveying the damage inflicted by the Scots on Newcastle, it is reported that the infuriated John vowed 'by God's teeth that he would never return until he had avenged this burning', and that 'he would make the fox-cub enter his lair', a derogatory reference to Alexander's red hair and youthfulness.[114] From there, John plunged northwards, advance elements of his army taking the baronial castles of Mitford and Morpeth on 7 January, Eustace de Vescy's chief stronghold at Alnwick on 9 January, and Robert de Ros's lands at Wark on 11 January, before coming together with the king at Norham by 14 January.[115] Shaken by the speed of the king's advance and the ruthless efficiency of his army in rolling up all resistance before it, the rebel barons of Yorkshire had fled before him, some burning their own castles and the supplies gathered in them to deprive John of any benefit from his gains. On 11 January 1216, they met Alexander at Melrose Abbey and sought his protection. According to the Chronicle of Melrose, which at that date was being kept by Abbot William (1215–16),[116] Alexander received them in the chapter-house of the abbey and there took their homage, as he had done at Felton for the barons of the northern counties, but he also required them to swear fealty to him and give additional security of their future faithfulness to him by swearing oaths whilst touching relics of the saints of Melrose.[117] The chronicle does not say if they offered their allegiance to him as an English baron or as king of Scots, but it certainly appears that Alexander had nothing to learn from King John in his ruthless exploitation of every opportunity presented to him to advance his own interests. The barons of Yorkshire had come to him for protection and support, and in return he had extracted under oath their total submission.[118] In so doing, he had surpassed the achievement of David I, who had tried but failed to win the submission of Yorkshire to his lordship, but he had also gone far beyond what the Twenty-Five had been willing to recognise was his just heritage. Legitimate grievance had blurred into a shamelessly opportunistic land-grab which exploited the desperation of John's northern baronial opponents to

find a protector who would shelter them from the wrath of their king. The oaths of fugitives, however, were only as good as their ability to deliver control of territory into his hands.

Most contemporary English chronicle accounts of John's January–February 1216 campaign are hostile to Alexander and imply that he offered no serious opposition to the invasion of his kingdom. Matthew Paris implies that John took Alexander's castles and wasted his territory without challenge, and that he would have achieved more had not threats further south in his own kingdom forced his withdrawal.[119] Walter of Coventry makes similar claims, speaking of John's unopposed advance, attributing this to fear on the part of the youthful Scottish king and his young associates, who had fled into hiding in the remoter districts of his kingdom.[120] Certainly, the main accounts of the campaign present a record of widespread devastation and apparently irresistible power as John swept across the River Tweed and into Lothian, spreading out his force to maximise its impact. First to suffer was Berwick, where both burgh and castle fell to his army on 15 January and, in revenge for the pillaging of Newcastle, John unleashed his mercenaries on the defenceless townsfolk.[121] The following day, in what must have been a bitter blow to Alexander's self-esteem and personal prestige, Roxburgh, which had been the chief seat of the great king David I, was burned, although it is not claimed that the royal castle there fell to the enemy.[122] On 17 January, advance units of his army burned Dunbar and captured its castle, the chief seat of Earl Patrick, and penetrated as far as Haddington, which they also burned.[123] This catalogue of unopposed devastation does suggest that Alexander was powerless to resist John, but a thirteenth-century St Andrews' chronicle account, founded on contemporary records, presents an altogether different picture.[124] From Melrose, Alexander appears to have fallen back north along the old Roman road known as Dere Street (effectively the modern A68) towards Edinburgh, sending ahead orders for reinforcements to assemble there; rather than running away from John, his intention was to confront him close to Edinburgh and, if possible, bring him to battle. It was a bold move and a dramatic reversal of Scottish military strategy since 1138, which had been to avoid set-piece confrontations with English armies.[125] The Scottish army was drawn up on the west bank of the River Esk near Pentland, a position which would allow Alexander to intercept any advance by John's army towards Edinburgh, or catch it in the flank if it attempted to withdraw towards John's base at Berwick via Dere Street. The speed with which John

had advanced into Scotland suggests that he had only a small but highly mobile force with him – certainly not a full host with substantial numbers of infantrymen and a lumbering supply train. News that Alexander and the full Scottish host was drawn up in battle array against his army was enough to persuade John, who might already have been growing increasingly concerned at his remoteness from the main theatre of operations in the south, to withdraw his men along the same route as they had advanced. To the outrage of Abbot William of Melrose, the retreating mercenaries burned Coldingham Priory – ironically a cell of the English Durham Cathedral–Priory – and at Berwick the king ordered the burning of the town before his departure, reportedly setting fire personally to the house in which he had lodged.[126] He had most assuredly ravaged the chief economic centres of Alexander's kingdom, but he had failed to maintain any foothold within Scotland from which to increase the pressure on the Scottish king and force his disengagement from the civil war in England. With the English king's winter offensive having failed, it was now Alexander's turn to go on the attack, leading his army back across the Tweed in pursuit of John.

As John fell back southwards from Berwick around 24 January, Alexander and his army moved rapidly in his wake. Through February he maintained the pursuit deep into northern England, but Alexander abandoned the chase in Swaledale in north Yorkshire and turned west across Stainmore into Westmorland and Cumberland, finally drawing up his army before the walls of Carlisle.[127] Like Norham the previous year, however, Carlisle proved too difficult a nut to crack for an army which lacked a siege train of stone-throwing artillery and engineers skilled in breaching stone-built defences.[128] In retribution for the harrying of Lothian by John's Brabantine mercenaries, Alexander had unleashed his men to plunder and burn along the course of the broad arc which his army cut through northern England. He appears, however, to have attempted to prevent outrages against English clergy and their property; he was, after all, trying to fight a chivalrous war and present his honourable behaviour as the very antithesis of John's brutality and irreligion. John's men had burned and plundered monasteries; Alexander was at pains to prevent his from doing likewise. His efforts in this regard, however, failed at the last, for as his army withdrew towards the Solway fords a large contingent descended on the abbey of Holm Cultram, a colony of Melrose which had been founded by Alexander's own grandfather in 1150 on the coast west of Carlisle, and ransacked it.[129] Blame for the outrage has

often been laid at the feet of Galwegians serving in the king's army, for Alan of Galloway's people have acquired a long-standing reputation for violence, irreligion and insubordination based on their behaviour in David I's campaigns in the 1130s. On this occasion, however, they appear to have been innocent, for the Melrose Chronicle, which records the incident, names the perpetrators specifically as Scots – a distinction which would have been well understood at the time. Although Divine retribution seemed to have been visited swiftly upon the guilty parties when they misjudged the state of the tide and were overwhelmed and drowned as they crossed the Eden estuary, Alexander decided that when he returned to the offensive in the summer he would not risk including ill-disciplined Scots in his army.[130]

Through spring 1216 Alexander remained apparently inactive in his own kingdom. In England, in the meantime, John had maintained his relentless pressure against his opponents to such good effect that many of the less committed to the baronial cause returned to his peace. The hard core of John's baronial enemies, however, intensified their own efforts against him, and increased the pressure on the Dauphin Louis to come to England and receive the crown they had offered him. There is no suggestion that Alexander was at this stage in direct contact with the French or simply biding his time whilst events beyond his control unfolded elsewhere. Rather, it seems that he was making careful preparations for a renewal of his offensive, in particular acquiring the materiel and personnel with the skills necessary for successful siege warfare. When on 21 May Louis finally landed in Kent and reinvigorated the baronial party, Alexander's preparations were almost complete. Just over four weeks later, Louis sent letters to Alexander and the leading barons who had not yet done him homage as king of England, requiring them to come into his faith or quit the kingdom immediately.[131] The demand appears innocuous enough – simply a necessary step to assert his leadership of the political community by the man who aspired to be their king, but it masked a more serious concern on Louis' part. By June, Louis would have been well aware of the submissions that Alexander had received at Melrose, and probably well understood the threat they posed to the integrity of the kingdom over which he hoped to rule. He needed to be sure that Alexander could be brought into a formal lord–man relationship with him which recognised that he held his gains in northern England as an English baron, not as a sovereign ruler. For his part, bolstered by the confidence of youth and further buoyed by the

striking success which his military manoeuvres against John had brought, it was a summons to which Alexander was ready to respond on his own terms.

For his new campaign, Alexander needed trained and well-equipped men and adequate money and supplies, not a host of ill-disciplined and poorly armed Scottish warriors. According to the Chronicle of Melrose, the king advanced once more into England 'with his whole army, except for the Scots from whom he took money'.[132] Here again the chronicler was careful to identify those whom the king did not want for his campaign: men from the Gaelic regions north of the Forth, whose presence in his army might do more harm than good for his reputation in northern England.[133] It was not, however, merely good opinions which Alexander intended to win, for he wanted to go to his planned meeting with Louis in possession of the greatest of the prizes which yet eluded him in northern England, to negotiate from a position of strength and not as a supplicant pursuing unrealised promises. In July, therefore, Alexander crossed the border once more and drew up his army outside Carlisle, which was held in John's name by his most loyal northern lieutenant, Robert de Vieuxpont; this time he was apparently prepared for a siege. On 8 August the city surrendered to Alexander, who then redeployed his forces to prosecute the siege of the castle that had been the chief residence of his great-grandfather and where he had died in 1153.[134] Alexander, however, could not afford to wait as he had done at Norham, especially as he needed to be sure that he was properly included in the settlement of affairs in the kingdom of England that Louis, now that he had arrived, was discussing with his baronial supporters. Having set the siege of the castle firmly in place, around the middle of August[135] Alexander took a large mounted detachment of men and, accompanied by Eustace de Vescy, rode south-east from the city across the Pennines into Teesdale. Much of the country east of the Pennines was still held for John by two key barons: Philip of Oldcoates, sheriff of Northumberland and keeper of the bishopric of Durham, who had the keeping of all the main royal castles in those districts and command of a substantial number of men;[136] and Hugh Balliol, lord of Barnard Castle in Teesdale.[137] The capture of a strategic fortress like Balliol's, which could dominate the eastern end of the trans-Pennine routes, was an inviting prospect and would have given a significant morale boost to the rebel barons in the north. As Alexander and his brother-in-law reconnoitred its defences, however, Eustace, who had pushed back his helmet better to see the walls, was struck in the head by a

crossbow bolt that pierced his brain, killing him instantly.[138] 'Greatly distressed in mind', Alexander abandoned any further thought of a siege and began to push south rapidly through England, wasting the land of John and his supporters as he went.

Detail is lacking of Alexander's dash south, other than that he probably passed close to Lincoln, where several northern baronial leaders were besieging the castle then, trailing them in his wake, passed by London and shortly after 8 September reached Canterbury in Kent.[139] There he was met by Louis, who had left his army besieging Dover Castle to travel to receive the Scottish king with honour and conduct him to his camp on the south coast;[140] it was the farthest south a Scottish king was ever to lead a hostile force into England. On the day after his arrival, Alexander and the northern barons gave their homage to Louis. According to the Chronicle of Melrose, Alexander did homage in the same manner as the barons of England, but it does not name the lands for which he made submission and goes on to say that Louis and the barons then in return swore to Alexander on holy relics that they would never make any peace with the English king that did not include Alexander.[141] The *Histoire des Ducs de Normandie*, a trustworthy contemporary account of the conduct of the baronial campaign, states that Alexander did homage to Louis for 'Loonois' (Lothian),[142] the northernmost portion of the old Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Northumbria which had been in Scottish hands almost without break for two centuries. It is probable that his homage was for Lothian and Northumbria, meaning the northern counties, as had been adjudicated to him by Louis' baronial supporters the previous year. Alexander appears to have remained with Louis at Dover for some time, perhaps trying to extract more generous terms, for he was obliged to try to raise additional money to support his followers and himself there through selling hides which he had taken from his own burgesses in Scotland;[143] the war and the diplomacy connected to it was placing a heavy burden on the Scottish king's slender resources. Whatever Alexander may have aspired to in terms of control over northern England, in September 1216 the would-be English king, Louis, still regarded those territories as integral to his kingdom, and if Alexander were to hold them it would be as an English baron. Despite Alexander's efforts, no further concession was to be made to him. It may have been on that account that Alexander 'returned in sorrow to his own'.[144]

Having met the conditions which Louis had demanded of his

supporters in June, but apparently having failed to win any wider gains, Alexander left Dover for the return north around the beginning of October. Carlisle Castle still had not fallen to his besieging army, and there was disturbing intelligence that John and his army were moving east into Lincolnshire, threatening to cut off Alexander's route home. According to Walter of Coventry, his withdrawal northwards, accompanied by the northern barons, was inspired by fear of John, who was 'becoming master of nearly the whole kingdom' and who was threatening to 'shut them out from their territories' already being ravaged by his lieutenants.[145] It was, however, no precipitate flight. Contemporary Scottish accounts preserved in the later chronicles of Fordun and Bower report that John had made elaborate preparations along the line of the River Trent to block Alexander and the rebels' route. Most bridges had been cut down, boats at ferrying-places disabled, fords destroyed and piquets planted to harry the marching column.[146] The old warrior had certainly spread his power widely through the country north of the Trent, and between 21 September and 10 October had cut across the rebel lines of communication in a march which took him from Rockingham in Northamptonshire north to Lincoln, across to the coast and Grimsby, and then south and east to King's Lynn in Norfolk.[147] Despite these arrangements, however, Alexander out-scouted his opponent and brought his men safely north. It may have been news of the advance of Alexander towards the defensive line which John had drawn along the Trent valley that brought him, sick with the dysentery he had contracted whilst at King's Lynn, hurrying back across the Wash fords, where part of his baggage train was lost in the mud and rising tide.[148] By 18 October John, gravely ill and physically weak, was at the bishop of Lincoln's castle of Newark-on-Trent. There, he inflicted the greatest possible damage that he could on the interests of Alexander and his rebel associates: he died. There is no need for the meal of unripe peaches and new cider that later popular tradition blames for the sudden intestinal disorder which killed him, for, exhausted by the rigours of a campaign that would have taxed much younger men, and weakened by dysentery, he passed away on the night of 18–19 October. John's death takes some lustre from the small victory which the Scots scored on 19 October when they broke through the Trent line, sacking the main encampment of the demoralised royalist army. It may only have been some days later, when Alexander was well on his road 'back safely to Scotland without loss and with much glory',[149] that he perhaps had news confirmed of the death of his old foe.

It would have been immediately apparent to Alexander that John's death transformed the political situation in England. For most of the English rebels and, indeed, for Alexander himself, it had been the person of John, his style of government, and above all his untrustworthiness, capriciousness and vindictiveness which had brought them into the field against him. John was gone, and those motivating factors had passed with him. The rebellion did not simply wither away – many of the rebel leaders had gone too far in their hostility to John and his family now to give up the struggle and make their peace – but a year of conflict had brought much damage, expenditure and few tangible gains. So far, Alexander had gained the notional award to him of the northern counties, and received the personal homage of the rebel barons within those areas and from northern Yorkshire, but the defence mounted by Philip of Oldcoates, Hugh Balliol and Robert de Vieuxpont had prevented him from achieving physical control of most of that region. His one real success, apart from the outstanding boost to his personal prestige which the unprecedented foray to Dover and back had brought, was his capture of Carlisle, where the castle too had finally fallen into his hands.[150] The hard-fought nature of the siege, and the efforts of Alexander's engineers to take the castle, is attested in English financial records from 1232–3, when instructions were issued for the repair of a breach in the wall of one of the towers in the castle's enclosure, and repairs to a section of the curtain that had been undermined by Scottish miners.[151] Alexander's dogged determination to take the castle had caused delays and the diversion of a significant part of his military resources during the campaigns of 1215–16 – resources that might have delivered greater gains elsewhere. It was probably not simply a question of anxiety to eliminate any threat to his extended lines of communication from the Carlisle garrison, but more an issue of the psychological symbolism of the city and castle. Carlisle, after all, had been the centrepiece of David I's extended domain and the place where he had died in 1153; regaining it was about more than strategic advantage. If the rebellion were to fail and all the concessions that its leaders had made to Alexander consequently unravelled, Alexander was determined to entrench his position in the one key gain he had made.

Gestures of conciliation were almost immediately directed towards Alexander by the English loyalists in the days after their king's death. A letter was sent to him by the loyal barons, inviting him to participate in a process of election of a new king.[152] It may simply

have been a formality, a process designed to detach from Louis those moderate barons who had personal qualms about disinheriting John's nine-year-old son Henry, but it did represent a chance for Alexander to end his involvement in the war and perhaps safeguard the concessions he had received from the Twenty-Five. Who would challenge the legitimacy of his grievances against the old king? Alexander made no response to the overture, which in any event was rendered redundant by the pressing need of the loyalists to give their cause a new figurehead, around whom opposition to Louis and his baronial supporters could rally. At Gloucester on 28 October 1216, probably before Alexander had reached his own kingdom once more, John's young son was crowned as King Henry III, and the Scottish king was presented with a new stark choice: submit and come into the boy-king's peace, or maintain his defiance and take his chances in what was now a war of simple territorial aggression by one king against another rather than the legitimate action of an aggrieved vassal against a faithless lord.

Over the winter of 1216–17, the men leading Henry's government were successful in drawing many waverers to their side and in extending their king's authority from its principal centres in the West Country and Thames Valley. One key in their success was a reissuing of Magna Carta in Henry's name, but it was a changed document that had been shorn of those clauses which in any way compromised the kingship of the under-age king; Henry's regents had promised to pass on to him the kingdom as it had been ruled by his father, and any decisions which changed that status quo could only be addressed once the new king came of age. This action affected Alexander directly, for Clause 59 of the Runnymede charter, which had promised to do justice by the Scottish king, was omitted from the reissued version. Of even greater concern was its omission even from the list of items that were to be reserved for future consideration. If Alexander wanted peace, it would only come with his unconditional submission and withdrawal from all that he had seized in the course of the English civil war.

In retrospect, it could be argued that the course of events in England had been moving away from any possible influence upon them which Alexander could exert, even from before John's death in October 1216. Indeed, more powerful forces were at work than Alexander could ever have hoped to overcome, and what in autumn 1215 had seemed to be an unsurpassed opportunity for gain was now

revealed as an empty phantasm. The critical factor in all of this was John's submission to Pope Innocent III in May 1213 and recognition of the papacy as his temporal as well as spiritual overlord. As John's superior lord, Innocent had been bound to uphold the rights of his vassal and had given unequivocal support against the barons from the outset, denouncing Magna Carta and empowering his representatives in England to pronounce spiritual censures against anyone who defied their king. Already embroiled in his own dispute with the pope over his bigamous marriage, Philip II of France was reluctant to throw the full weight of French royal power behind his son and the English rebels, making it clear that Louis and the French nobles who accompanied him were involved in a private endeavour. This stance was more than mere posturing, for when his son appealed to him for men and money through the winter of 1216–17, Philip refused to come to his aid or to permit more of his vassals to cross to England. Not for the first time, papal decision-making was changing the course of politics within the British Isles.[153]

The papacy's efforts on John's behalf had not ended when Innocent III died on 16 July 1216, for his successor, Honorius III, was as determined to uphold the rights of his English vassal. In May 1216 the papal legate Cardinal Guala Bicchieri had arrived in England armed with exceptionally wide powers which overrode previous papal concessions to the Scots concerning the exercise of legatine authority throughout all of Britain. It is unlikely that Alexander and his councillors were unaware of the significance of this development, for a delegation of senior Scottish clerics led by William Malveisin, bishop of St Andrews, and Walter, bishop of Glasgow, had travelled to Rome for the Lateran Council, which was held between 11 and 30 November 1215.[154] Two of the Scottish delegates, Brice Douglas, bishop of Moray, and Henry, abbot of Kelso, had returned to Scotland at the end of the council, but Walter remained at the papal curia until 1217 and William lingered in France – in apparently self-imposed exile – until early 1218.[155] Their remaining there certainly helped them to avoid the excommunication that was pronounced against those who maintained their defiance of papal instructions to submit to John and then Henry III, but it also provided an opportunity for intelligence concerning papal policies to reach Alexander. Even if Bishop William refrained from direct communication with Alexander across this period, there can be no doubt that the clerics who returned from Rome in the winter of 1215–16 had brought first-hand knowledge to the king of the pope's uncompromising stance in support of John.

Alexander, therefore, had entered the conflict and maintained his defiance in full knowledge of the probable spiritual consequences for his kingdom and himself. Guala's mere presence was unlikely by itself to sway Alexander from this course.

Guala had set with a will to the task in hand immediately upon his arrival in England. A general sentence of excommunication had been pronounced against John's enemies in September 1215, when Innocent III's denouncement of Magna Carta had been broadcast. It, however, had referred only vaguely to the king's opponents, naming no-one specifically. On 29 May he issued a fresh bann of excommunication and interdict which expressly named Louis and his supporters. This had apparently been reinforced in November 1216 by an extension of the sentence to Alexander and his nobles, and subsequently extended further to include all senior clerics in his allegiance.[156] The mandate for the sentence against Alexander, it has been suggested, could have been prepared at Bristol on 11 November, a fortnight after Henry III's coronation, but that its implementation was delayed in the hope that Alexander might be brought to his senses by the gravity of the threat with which he was faced.[157] The approach to Alexander in October concerning the election of John's successor certainly suggests that the loyalists were seeking to detach him from the rebels, and so they might have prevailed on Guala to defer immediate pronouncement of the sentence.[158] Honorius III does not seem to have considered any excommunication and interdict against Alexander to have been operative before 17 January 1217, when he wrote to the king in forthright terms to lament the shortcomings of his devotion to the Roman Church – a sharp contrast to the honour in which his father had held it – and repeating the call for him to submit and come into the allegiance of King Henry.[159] Even at this time the pope was still attempting to avoid extreme spiritual measures, offering Alexander the promise in return for his submission that he would use his influence to intercede directly on his behalf with the English king and give him assistance to recover his (unspecified) rights. Alexander remained unmoved by even this direct approach from Honorius, and it is clear from papal letters of early July 1217 that he was considered excommunicated on the basic premise that he had still not entered Henry's peace.[160] As Keith Stringer has pointed out, however, this does not mean necessarily that any formal sentence had been pronounced and broadcast. Indeed, the Chronicle of Melrose goes so far as to claim that publication of the excommunication and interdict was not made until as late as September 1217, following the

submission of Louis and the English rebels to Henry.[161] Melrose, however, is hardly an impartial source of evidence for these matters, and it is perhaps likely that what was being recorded in September 1217 was an explicit restatement of the sentence against Alexander and his supporters – who still maintained their defiance of both Honorius III and Henry III – following the formal absolution of Henry's opponents in England.

Throughout this spiritual diplomacy, Alexander had not remained inactive. Detailed analysis of the position in Cumberland and Westmorland by Keith Stringer has demonstrated convincingly that Alexander and his chief supporters used the powerful leverage which control of Carlisle gave them, coupled with the resolute hostility of the regional baronage to John and his successor, in an attempt to entrench Scottish lordship over the English north-west.[162] Stringer's research has revealed that Henry III's government believed some seventy-seven rebel barons, knights and freeholders in the two counties had given their allegiance to Alexander, while in April 1217 it appeared that the influential Augustinian cathedral–priory at Carlisle had accepted his lordship and elected one of his clerks as bishop on his nomination.[163] This right of nomination was something which pertained to Henry III as king of England; that Alexander had assumed it for himself is an unquestionable indication that he considered himself to be, and intended to rule over Cumberland and Westmorland as, a sovereign ruler and nothing less. As David I had done in the 1140s, Alexander sought both to enmesh the incumbent regional elite within his administration of the territory and to establish key members of his own nobility in powerful positions throughout the north-west. The key figure in all of this was Alan of Galloway, who had inherited through his mother, Helen de Morville, a claim to the lordship of North Westmorland, which had been held by her grandfather, Hugh, in the time of David I; and to those territories which her uncle, also named Hugh and infamous in history as one of the murderers of Archbishop Thomas Becket of Canterbury, had held in the time of Henry II.[164] To Alan, Alexander granted the lordship of Appleby and, apparently, the keepership of Carlisle Castle, positions which John's lieutenant Robert de Vieuxpont had held and which Alexander probably intended to signify the replacement of the English king's deputy by his own representative agent. Immediately, Alan began to forge close personal bonds with the families who held land within his new lordship, and also to strengthen his existing kinship ties with families in the district down the west coast of

Cumberland.[165] But Alexander himself and others of his nobles had also inherited close personal links with the regional nobility of Cumberland and Westmorland, many being founded on pre-existing cross-border landholding; the king, after all, had been lord of Tynedale before the outbreak of the war. His grip on the region, therefore, was founded on real authority rather than any illusion of power.

While regaining his great-grandfather's lordship over Carlisle may have been Alexander's chief war aim, he was no less entitled to the earldom of Northumberland that his father and grandfather had possessed until 1157. In May 1217, as the war in England approached its climax, Alexander led his men across the border once more in what was probably intended either as the beginning of an effort to win the lordship over Northumberland that he had been awarded in 1215, or as a counter-offensive against the highly effective loyalist Philip of Oldcoates. His target was Mitford Castle, one of those strongholds that John had seized in January 1216, an important strength but certainly not of such strategic importance as Alnwick or Norham. After barely a week, Alexander lifted the siege and retreated northwards.[166] The reason for this premature end to the campaign was probably the stunning news of the rout of Louis's army by the supporters of Henry III at the battle of Lincoln on 20 May.[167] Although Louis himself had eluded capture and was still in control of large parts of the south and east of England, Alexander probably knew that it was only a matter of time before Henry's enemies submitted. News of the victory probably spurred Oldcoates and his associate Hugh Balliol to go on the offensive against Alexander, who hastily called out his host to oppose them with a counter-attack into Northumberland in early July.[168] Refusing still to accept what must have seemed inevitable to even the most committed of his supporters, Alexander raised yet another army to invade Northumberland, but he had only reached Jedburgh, still safely inside his own kingdom, when news came that on 12 September Louis and Henry had made their peace. The war in England was over. Abandoned by the ally who had sworn that he would make no peace with John or Henry III that did not include the Scottish king, although Louis had insisted in the negotiations that the Scottish king be given the option to accept the treaty with Henry if he wished, Alexander at last accepted that the great adventure was over; he disbanded his army and waited at Jedburgh for news of the consequences which he knew must surely come.[169]

First came the spiritual penalties. Soon after Louis' submission, Guala published the sentence of excommunication and interdict against Alexander 'and all the earls and barons, knights and magnates, bishops and prelates of the whole kingdom of Scotland'.[170] Two months later, on 1 December at Berwick, Guala's representatives the archbishop of York and the bishop of Durham absolved first Alexander, then on 4 December his mother, Queen Ermengarde.[171] The condition for this absolution had been that Alexander surrender Carlisle, the English government having written directly to Alan of Galloway to that effect in the days immediately after the treaty with Louis.[172] The city and castle, however, remained in Scottish hands until the start of December when, following Alexander's absolution, the archbishop of York crossed to Cumberland to receive its surrender.[173] Then there followed the direct political consequences, with the systematic dismantling of the establishment that Alexander had so recently instituted for control of Cumberland and Westmorland. This saw the reversal of a whole series of his awards and punitive fines being levied against those men and corporations who had too closely associated themselves with Scottish rule.[174] Matters had not ended with the submission at Berwick, however, for Alexander was still required to give his personal homage to Henry for his English lands before peace between them could be finally concluded. On 23 December he arrived at Northampton, where Henry III was holding his Christmas court, and there, in a ceremony watched over by Cardinal Guala, gave his homage for the earldom of Huntingdon and lordship of Tynedale.[175] If any attempt was made to raise the issue of Alexander's still unresolved grievances and claims, no mention of them was made, and the well-schooled Henry took Alexander's submission on the same terms as it had been given to John. Two years of bloodshed and huge outlay of effort, money and materials were over with no tangible gain whatsoever for the Scottish king. He had, however, given clear notice that he was no mere red-haired fox cub, but a skilled warrior and politician not to be trifled with. He had perhaps been lucky to have avoided the rout at Lincoln, which might have brought a still less satisfactory outcome,[176] but the end of the war had nevertheless meant personal humiliation and could not be represented as anything other than a complete failure of his policies. The war had been lost, but the peace was still there to win.

THREE

Finding a Just Peace

Through the winter of 1217–18 Alexander probably took careful stock of the hand that fate had dealt him since the time of John's death. It was certainly a turn of Fortune's wheel, for despite the apparent political advantages and military superiority he seemed to have possessed in autumn 1216 he had ended up with nothing to show for all his tremendous efforts and personal achievements. In common with the Melrose chronicler who blamed the failure of Alexander's enterprise on the bad faith of those English barons who had given him their homage and fealty yet who had deserted him at the critical moment,[177] the young king perhaps took comfort from a belief that it was the perfidy of foresworn men which had robbed him of success rather than any failure on his own part. More recent historiography has moved beyond this personal blame game to focus instead on the unevenness of the conflict and the new hard edges which had formed around political and cultural identities within Britain in the course of the twelfth century.[178] In the two generations since his great-grandfather David I had extended his kingdom into the same territories that Alexander had laboured so hard to regain, a new sense of English identity had established itself amongst most of the political leadership of those districts, ending the easy transfer of allegiances which had been possible in earlier times. Personal grievances against John and his government had opened fissures in English society, but even these had not fractured the kingdom along the traditional fault lines which had still been so much in evidence until the 1150s. Alexander may have dreamt of detaching the northern counties from England and adding them to his own realm, but neither the Committee of Twenty-Five nor their candidate for the kingship had ever had any intention of permitting that to happen. Expediency in the winter of 1215–16 may have driven some of the rebel English barons to accept the stark terms upon which Alexander was prepared to offer them assistance – homage and fealty to him on Scottish soil as king of Scots – but the removal of the object of their hatred and fear in October 1216 had ended their need for a powerful alternative protector. By November 1217 even Alexander's brother-in-law Robert de Ros had regained the favour of the English government and was one of the former northern rebels who was instructed to escort the

Scottish king from Berwick south to Northampton to make his formal submission to Henry III.[179] There was little prospect that such men, who had managed to salvage their lands and position via the English government's desperate need to re-establish royal authority through achieving political consensus, would jeopardise that recovery by demanding justice for the Scottish king. It was very much up to Alexander to rescue what he could from the wreckage of his grand design.

Although Alexander was clearly in a very weak position at the end of the war, abandoned by his allies amongst the northern English baronage and faced with the determination of the papacy to uphold the rights of its young English protégé, Henry's government equally could not exclude him from the settlement which they were offering to all of John's former opponents: a return to the status quo *ante bellum*. Once Alexander had disgorged those parts of northern England that he had still occupied at the end of the war and made his formal submission to Henry, the English government was obliged to start the process of restoring Alexander's possessions elsewhere in England. On 19 December, therefore, instructions were issued to seven English sheriffs to give Alexander seisin of all the properties of the earldom of Huntingdon which his uncle, Earl David, held of him.[180] The issuing of instructions, however, was the easy part; securing delivery of the lands by the men to whom John had granted them in 1216 was altogether more difficult. In March 1218 the orders to restore seisin of the Huntingdon lands and all the attendant rights of Earl David were repeated, the mandate's authorisation of the use of force to eject those unlawfully detaining them revealing growing frustration on the part of the English government.[181] As the delays in restoring him, and by extension his elderly uncle, to full possession of the earldom lands grew, however, so too did Alexander's sense of grievance at the outcome of the conflict.

It was not only Alexander who felt aggrieved at the course of events from the end of the war. When Alexander had been absolved from his excommunication on 1 December 1217, his kingdom had remained under interdict and, while he journeyed from Berwick to Northampton, the whole of the Scottish clergy with the exception of the Cistercian monks had continued the suspension of religious services.[182] Believing that the general privileges of their Order exempted them from the interdict, the Cistercians had continued to conduct services in their monasteries; it was a costly miscalculation

and the outcome served to stoke up the hostility expressed in Scottish record sources towards the role of Guala and his agents in the ending of the conflict. According to the Chronicle of Melrose, at the end of January 1218 Guala's agents – the prior of Durham and the archdeacon of the East Riding of Yorkshire – arrived at Berwick to begin the process of lifting the banns of excommunication and interdict from the Scottish clergy and people.[183] The bishops and senior Scottish clergy – especially those clerics attached to Alexander's household[184] – with the exception of Bishop William Malveisin of St Andrews, who had wisely remained absent from Scotland during the latter part of the conflict and who had already been absolved, were regarded as culpable for their role in encouraging Alexander in his defiance of papal mandates and exempted from the absolution. They had to make separate submissions and receive appropriate penalties. From Berwick, the prior and archdeacon travelled to Edinburgh for a meeting with Alexander and his councillors. There, the Melrose chronicler states that the Scots' acceptance of ecclesiastical judgement and papal mandates was demanded as the general concession in return for absolution. It has been suggested that this requirement related to the claims of the Scottish king for justice in respect of the treaties of 1209 and 1212, but more recently it has been interpreted as an altogether more innocent expression of reconciliation with the Church.[185] Having received an oath to that effect, the prior and archdeacon then proceeded north as far as Aberdeen to receive the submission of the clergy and to extract the fines levied on them for their defiance of the pope and his legates.[186]

For the Cistercians the price of that defiance, which had been compounded by their refusal to accept that the interdict applied to them, was more serious. On 25 March 1218, two months after the beginning of the lifting of the interdict from the rest of the Scottish clergy, the archdeacon, Walter of Wisbech, had pronounced Guala's mandate that all Cistercian monks in the kingdom were to desist from celebrating divine offices. The abbots of the five Cistercian abbeys then existing within the territory of the *ecclesia Scoticana* immediately placed their monasteries and properties under the protection of the peace of God – for, as excommunicates, they could expect no legal or spiritual redress for any offences against them – and also papal protection, then hurried south to put their case before the legate, from whom they gained personal absolution. In the meanwhile, Walter of Wisbech held a Church council at Berwick on 8 and 9 April, where he pronounced the formal excommunication of the Cistercians and all

men who had dealings with them. Those Cistercians at the council at once appealed to the pope and, sheltering behind an appeal made on behalf of the whole Order by the abbot of Cîteaux, they treated the interdict against them as invalid. News of the appeal and the continued refusal of the Scottish Cistercians to recognise his authority infuriated Guala, who subjected the abbots who were still with him at York to a humiliating public dressing-down before despatching them back to Scotland to impose the interdict on their own communities. The impact of this defeat is played down by the Melrose chronicler, who states simply that the Cistercians adhered to the interdict 'for some time' until absolved during that summer by Bishop Malveisin on the legate's authority, after they had sworn to accept the judgement of the Church and any papal mandate on the matter. Much more attention is given to the subsequent appeal by the abbot of Cîteaux at Rome against Guala's assault on the Order's privileges and what the Cistercians saw as his personal disgrace, but this occurred against a backdrop of continuing action against both the Cistercians and the Scottish clergy more generally by the legate and his delegates.

In the week after Walter of Wisbech's Berwick council, senior members of the Scottish Church hastened south to a meeting with the legate at Northallerton. According to surviving Scottish accounts of the gathering on 15 April, Guala extracted large bribes – but more probably fines – from some as the price of personal absolution; others he deprived of their benefices or imposed suspension from office until they submitted and paid even larger financial settlements, while a select group of clergy were required to travel in person to Rome to secure papal absolution.[187] That group included three bishops – Walter of Glasgow, Brice of Moray and Adam of Caithness[188] – the last of whom, as former abbot of Melrose, was perhaps singled out as a Cistercian, although he seems also to have been regarded as a particularly close associate of Alexander. It appears that Guala also intended Alexander's chancellor, William del Bois, to travel to Rome for absolution, and that William was regarded as especially culpable for his role in advising and supporting the king during the war.[189]

Although William was released from the obligation to travel in person on account of injuries which he had suffered in a recent fall from his horse, and due to fears of actions against him and his family should he be forced to withdraw from Alexander's service, he remained deprived and suspended from his offices and benefices until his proctor had obtained papal absolution on his behalf. According to

the Melrose chronicler, it was not until 1219 that the absolved men returned to Scotland from Rome, but Bishop Walter had secured restoration by 6 June, while Bishop Brice was freed from suspension by 5 November.[190] For William del Bois, it took seven months for that absolution and restoration to his offices to be secured at Rome, and several weeks more for news of that to reach Scotland.[191] During this extended period, Alexander was effectively deprived of the counsel of three of his most senior clerics and, assuming that William del Bois obeyed the suspension directed against him, of his most experienced adviser. While Guala had genuine spiritual reasons for pursuing his actions against the Scottish clergy, it is difficult to avoid the suspicion that he was also seeking to isolate the Scottish king from men who might be more inclined to make a firm stand in the forthcoming negotiations to secure a lasting peace.

Throughout these events, the Scottish clergy believed that Guala had acted beyond the authority of his mandate, especially when he had extended his publication of the banns of excommunication and interdict to actual intervention within Scotland. This, they believed, was contrary to the privileges of the Scottish Church that had been secured from the papacy a generation earlier by the bull *Cum universi*, which had stated that only native Scots or men sent specifically to Scotland by the pope could serve as legates there.[192] Accordingly, when those clerics whom Guala had singled out for special treatment departed for Rome in April or May 1218, it seems that Alexander sent with them a request for a papal confirmation of that privilege.[193] Such a confirmation would have established clearly exactly what authority the pope's legate to England possessed to take action within Scotland. Before a response was received, however, Guala requested the termination of his legation, letters to that effect being issued at Rome on 12 September, and on 17/18 November he formally resigned his office at Reading and soon afterwards left England.[194] In his place as legate, Pope Honorius III had appointed another Italian cleric, his close associate and papal chamberlain Pandulf, bishop-elect of Norwich.[195] As Guala handed over his legatine authority to Pandulf, back in Rome Alexander's representatives were in the process of securing the confirmation of the privileges of the Scottish Church, which would ensure that Pandulf had no ability to interfere in Scottish internal affairs as his predecessor had done. The new legate was still charged with ensuring that the rights of the young English king were in no way undermined, but his powers to secure a settlement with Alexander which delivered that outcome were circumscribed by the

concessions the pope had made to the Scots.

On 21 November 1218, Pope Honorius III renewed and extended the bull *Cum universi* in a fresh bull which finally established the Scottish Church as *filia specialis*, a special daughter of the papal see.[196] This bull ended any question of the subjection of the Scottish Church to the spiritual supremacy of any English metropolitan, either the archbishop of Canterbury or York, and confirmed the rights of the Scots to have only a native-born legate or a legate sent specifically *a latere* to Scotland. Guala's actions in respect of the Scottish king, clergy and people seem to have been acknowledged by the pope as unnecessarily provocative in an already highly charged diplomatic climate, but the legate had been acting in that manner to secure the objective with which the pope had tasked him: the defence and reassertion of the rights of a papal vassal. By withdrawing the possibility of direct action against the Scots from Pandulf's legatine powers, Honorius was weakening his representative's ability to deliver that result. The bull *filia specialis* underscores the serious difficulties that the pope faced in knowing how best to handle the tangle of domestic politics and international diplomacy which was King John's bequest to him. Honorius on the one hand needed to demonstrate the effectiveness of his authority and protection as the temporal as well as spiritual overlord of the English king, but on the other he was confronted by the demands for justice from other loyal sons, the king of Scots not least amongst them. Although there is a tendency to concentrate on the powerful place occupied in English affairs by the pope's legates Guala and Pandulf, and their roles as papally appointed protectors of the rights and interests of the English crown, their pro-Englishness should not be seen as automatically anti-Scottish. The venom reserved by Scottish clerical chroniclers for the actions of the legates and their agents at the end of the war of 1215–17, inspired by the punitive levies which Honorius's representatives took as fines from them, subsequently acquired more overtly nationalistic recasting.[197] Closer inspection of events, however, suggest that throughout the process of restoring internal peace to England and stability within Britain more widely, the pope was attempting to work compromises that neither weakened the position of the young Henry III nor dismissed entirely Alexander's demands for justice.

The first of these attempts to find a middle way came two months after Pandulf had been appointed legate but before he had assumed office in England, and eleven days before he confirmed *Cum universi*,

when on 10 November 1218 Honorius sent new instructions to his legate. These instructed Pandulf to inspect the terms of the agreement which had been made between William and John, presumably that of 1209, and either confirm or annul it as he saw fit.[198] Alexander's representatives had evidently made the reasons for their king's involvement in the English civil war clearly known to Honorius, and he, knowing full well John's modus operandi, recognised the need to act. Pandulf probably received the letter in January or February 1219, but it was to be several months before the legate was in a position to act on his master's instructions.

What happened during those months before Pandulf acted on the pope's mandate can only be reconstructed in rough outline. One significant advance was in efforts on the part of the English government to tighten its control of Cumberland, where the canons of Carlisle had been strong supporters of Alexander II and had contemplated electing either his chancellor William del Bois or his clerk Robert of St Germain as their bishop. The man imposed as bishop on the see was Hugh, former abbot of the Cistercian monastery founded at Beaulieu in Hampshire by King John, a man closely associated with the English crown, who speedily set about reorganising the administration and finances of his diocese.[199] Along with Robert de Vieuxpont, Bishop Hugh was being established as a central pillar in a reinvigorated English political establishment in the north-west, capable of withstanding any future threat from the Scottish king; the influence of Alexander's supporters amongst the clergy of Carlisle diocese was being pared back and confined. Other men who had been central to Alexander's brief rule over Cumberland and Westmorland were less easy to bind back into a dependent relationship on the English king, the most notable being Alan of Galloway, who had still not given homage to Henry III for his English and Irish lands. Safe-conducts were issued for Alan in March and renewed in May, indicating the anxiety on the part of the English government to secure the formal submission of a man who had played such a prominent role throughout the war of 1215–17,[200] but although his younger brother Thomas, earl of Atholl, had given his homage by 19 June and been restored in possession of his Irish lands,[201] Alan continued to make excuses for why he could not come in person. It was to be a perhaps long-expected death that gave fresh impetus to efforts to settle the question of Alan's homage and to Pandulf's attempts to secure the formal peace with the Scottish king.

On 17 June 1219, according to the near-contemporary *Gesta Annalia* material incorporated within the late fourteenth-century chronicle of John of Fordun, King Alexander's uncle Earl David died at his manor of Yardley in Northamptonshire after a long illness which had perhaps afflicted him since before 1214.[202] His death represented a complication to the legate's attempt to reach a secure settlement of Alexander's grievances against the English crown for, as titular holder of the earldom, possession should have fallen to him during the minority of his young cousin John. For Alan, moreover, as son-in-law of Earl David, it was important to come into Henry III's peace to be sure of securing both the lands that his wife, Margaret of Huntingdon, had received from her father as her dowry and also any formal role in the administration of the earldom during the minority of his young brother-in-law. Instead, despite orders having being issued in December 1217 for seisin of the earldom to be given to King Alexander, and in March 1218 for the restoration of its lands and castles to Earl David, important Huntingdon properties had remained in the hands of the men to whom King John had entrusted them.[203] Neither Alexander nor Alan stood any immediate prospect of benefiting and the latter, therefore, saw no incentive to hurry to offer his homage to Henry. The impasse in respect of Huntingdon was typified by the case of William Marshal, 2nd earl of Pembroke, who simply refused to surrender Fotheringhay Castle, or William de Forz, count of Aumale, who was similarly occupying the Huntingdon manors of Nassington and Yarwell.[204] On receiving news of Earl David's death, the English government instructed Falkes de Bréauté, sheriff of Northampton and Huntingdon, to take the earl's properties into the king's hands until instructions as to their future keepership were issued.[205] Falkes, however, proved to be all but powerless to enforce that instruction, and the removal of even the residual local authority of the aged Earl David appears to have confirmed both men in their defiance and encouraged Earl William to go further. Barely a week after David's burial, William also seized the manor of Yardley, and in defiance of the king's officers and directly contrary to promises made, in July his men had begun to seize the dower lands of Earl David's widow.[206] An attempt in July and August 1219 to dislodge the earl and count from their occupation of the Huntingdon properties, including an instruction in the king's name ordering the constables of Fotheringhay and Rockingham to surrender Fotheringhay, Nassington and Yarwell to royal nominees, came to nothing when Henry's government was diverted by the eruption of a new potential crisis at

Lincoln.[207]

Huntingdon, therefore, was surely on the agenda when Pandulf finally met Alexander at Norham in Northumberland in early August, but the unfulfilled promises of the 1209 and 1212 Anglo-Scottish agreements was the main business of the meeting.[208] The discussions were brief but positive, and 3 November was agreed as the date for a second meeting at which a 'peace' or political settlement would be reached, which would avoid the need for Pandulf to make a judicial ruling that might leave one party or the other aggrieved.[209] In a letter of 8 August to Bishop Peter des Roches of Winchester, the legate announced that there had been a breakthrough which favoured the English king.[210] The news, which met him as he travelled south, of the failure to dislodge Pembroke and Aumale from the Huntingdon properties must therefore have been unwelcome indeed. Pandulf, however, was determined not to be deflected from his quest for a resolution of Anglo-Scottish tensions, and he continued to prepare for what was intended to be conclusive negotiations in early November. By late October 1219 it was clear that no meeting would be held, but in a gesture intended to demonstrate the goodwill of the English government towards Alexander, letters were issued on 29 October confirming the Scottish king's possession of Huntingdon, saving the rights of his young cousin, and instructing Pembroke to surrender Fotheringhay to Alexander's representative.[211]

The final push in Pandulf's efforts to resolve outstanding issues between the two kingdoms and draw a line under the events of 1215–17 began to progress rapidly in spring 1220. The legate and Henry's council were certainly keen to normalise relations and settle any matters which might threaten what was still a very insecure peace. Thus, when Alan of Galloway, who had still not made his formal submission to Henry III, wrote to request assurances concerning the lands in Ireland that he had been awarded by John before the war, Henry instructed Alan to come to York in June to give his homage and fealty for those lands when King Alexander and his principal councillors were due to meet with Henry and his councillors to discuss the affairs of their kingdoms.[212] As one of the biggest losers in the collapse of the Scottish position in 1217, a key advisor of the Scottish king, and a major military and naval power in his own right, Alan had the potential to destabilise any agreement which did not satisfy at least some of his concerns. This conciliatory gesture cost the English crown little and removed a significant potential impediment from the

path to a lasting settlement. Other issues, however, proved more intractable, especially the question of possession of key components of the Huntingdon heritage following the death of Earl David. Nothing was left to chance, and efforts made on the part of the English government to ensure that Alexander was treated with honour and respect perhaps admit the legitimacy of the Scottish king's grievances; instructions were issued to the bishop of Durham and Earl Warenne to meet the Scots at Berwick bridge and conduct them south with due honour.[213] By 11 June, Alexander, accompanied by his principal councillors and most experienced legal and diplomatic advisors, had arrived at York.

Surviving documents concerning the York conference indicate that its central business almost immediately came to focus on negotiations for the marriage of Alexander to one of Henry's sisters. It was expected that this would be the eldest of his three sisters, Joan, who had been born in 1210, but at the time of the negotiations she was beyond the reach of her brother's government, having been sent to France in the company of her mother Isabelle d'Angoulême as the prospective bride of Hugh de Lusignan, count of la Marche.[214] When Hugh had rejected the daughter in favour of the mother, the English government had been powerless to extract the princess from Hugh's hands, and Hugh and Isabelle had made it known that they expected territorial concessions in return for their compliance with the government's wishes. Knowing that they might be incapable of retrieving Joan from France, instructions were given for Henry's second sister, Isabella, to be brought to York by 15 June. As the younger and less politically prestigious of the king's sisters, she may have been considered by her brother's councillors as the preferred bride for the Scottish king;[215] despite her rejection by Hugh de Lusignan, Joan offered the potential of an important diplomatic marriage to a foreign ruler of greater status than the king of Scots. Alexander seems to have been determined to secure the eldest sister and the status of the young Henry's eldest brother-in-law, and appears to have been set on marrying Joan. Prestige apart, however, he was perhaps unwilling to accept a wife as young as Isabella, who was no more than eight years old and unlikely to bear him an heir for many years yet. Accordingly, on 15 June it was agreed that Joan, Henry's ten-year-old sister, was to wed Alexander by Michaelmas,[216] if she could be obtained from the custody of her mother and step-father. Should Henry be unable to obtain Joan, Alexander was instead to be married to Isabella. Neither sister came with any stated promise of a

marriage portion, something that Alexander would only belatedly complain of with the claim that John had promised in 1212 to give Northumbria as dowry for his daughter; certainly, the English government displayed awareness of such an agreement in the 1230s.[217] In return, Henry apparently quit Alexander of the unpaid balance of the 15,000 merks which his father had agreed to pay John as part of the 1209 and 1212 settlements, a sum that probably stood at around 5,000 merks,[218] and it is likely that he promised to ensure that Fotheringhay, which was still in Pembroke's hands, was speedily placed in Alexander's possession. Three days after the settlement of the marriage treaty, a fresh mandate to that effect was sent to Earl William, instructing him to hand over the castle to Alexander's representatives, as Henry wished 'love to exist between the two kings, and peace and honesty to be kept'.[219]

Pandulf had secured a remarkably favourable settlement for the English crown, but the treaty delivered still more favourable terms yet. It was also agreed that Henry, within a year from that October, would arrange for the marriage without disparagement of both of Alexander's sisters; or, if he failed to do so, would return them both to Alexander. This was a significant dilution of what the Scots had perhaps expected as the outcome of the 1209 treaty, for the thirteenth-century accounts preserved within the later chronicles of Fordun and Bower indicate that there was a firm belief that the elder of Alexander's sisters would marry Henry, while the younger would marry Henry's younger brother, Richard of Cornwall.[220] Although Alexander had secured his Plantagenet bride, there was to be no similar royal match for his sisters, whose hands remained at the disposal of the English government. The politics in this agreement were overt: Henry and Richard were freed to marry more diplomatically significant wives, while similar marriages for the Scottish princesses, which their brother could have used to win allies abroad, were denied. It was a triumph for Pandulf's diplomacy, which secured peace on the northern frontier at the cost of no territorial or significant financial settlement. Henry's heritage was preserved intact, while Alexander had been persuaded into acceptance of a fresh treaty, which apparently negated the terms of the 1209 and 1212 agreements that had been the cause of so much friction between the kingdoms. The Scottish king may have believed that the question of Northumbria remained unresolved, perhaps for future discussion as part of a marriage settlement for his wife, but for the meantime the English government considered the matter to be closed.

Secure closure, however, depended on Henry's government being able to obtain Joan from Hugh de Lusignan's custody. As a consequence, meeting Isabelle d'Angoulême and Hugh's demand for important royal properties in England promised to her as part of her dower when she married King John, but which had never been delivered to her, became inextricably bound up in the peace settlement with Alexander. Only three days after agreeing the treaty at York, the English government moved south to prise the most important of those properties, Rockingham Castle in Northamptonshire, from the hands of William of Aumale, and writing on the same day to Pembroke to ask him to surrender Fotheringhay.[221] On 13 August 1220, Henry III's government issued a safe-conduct for Alexander to come to York within the next three months for further negotiations but, with Joan still in France, probably not for his marriage.[222] The summer dragged on with little progress towards resolution of any of these matters, until in September Pope Honorius was moved to intervene with Hugh de Lusignan on behalf of his English vassal, ordering him to surrender both Joan and the territories which had been offered to him as her *maritagium* to her brother's representatives.[223] Some further movement came also as a result of a series of blows against Pembroke's power base in south Wales by Llywelyn, prince of Gwynedd, coupled with the earl's financial embarrassment. If Pembroke wanted royal aid to rescue him from this crisis, there would be a quid pro quo: the surrender of Fotheringhay. On 11 September the English government sent a letter reminding him that the castle had formed part of the marriage negotiations with Alexander, and expressing astonishment that he had defied earlier royal instructions on the matter and was still refusing to yield it.[224] Pembroke was again ordered to hand the castle over to Alexander's representatives for, it was claimed, his continued detention of Fotheringhay threatened the failure of the whole marriage treaty and would rebound to King Henry's personal loss and shame. Despite this threat, Pembroke prevaricated over the surrender of the castle and, while Pandulf wrote to Henry's councillors on 8 October urging them to secure its surrender into royal hands before he met Alexander at York, and clearly in the belief that the earl was ready to comply, by the last week in November Fotheringhay had still not been rendered up.[225]

Escorted by his old foe Philip of Oldcoates, and the Archbishop of York, Alexander travelled south to York in the second week of October for a meeting with Henry and his council starting on 13 October.[226]

There, all the English king, Pandulf and the royal council could offer him were promises and excuses, explaining that Pembroke was now ready to hand over Fotheringhay and the rest of the Huntingdon heritage that he had detained since the end of the war, and that Hugh de Lusignan was preparing to deliver Joan into their hands. It has been suggested that Alexander was satisfied with their explanations and agreed to be patient, but the coincidence between the failure of the English government to deliver on the promises made in June and renewed efforts by Alexander to establish the fully independent status of his kingship makes it unlikely that these matters were unrelated.[227] The return of Joan, however, was imminent, for the week before the York meeting the English council had at last decided to abandon its attempts to force Hugh de Lusignan to hand her over and to disgorge the *maritagium* that had been offered with the girl by refusing to give him the dower lands that his new wife had been promised as queen. On 5 October the council had written to Hugh conceding these matters, but it is unlikely that he had even received the letter before Alexander and Henry met at York; all Henry's government could do was express their firm belief that Joan would soon be returned. Alexander returned from York empty-handed and, most likely, angered by the English government's failure to give him any tangible sign that they would honour – indeed, that they were capable of honouring – the June treaty.

On 20 November, letters were sent to King Henry's bailiffs informing them that he had given protection to Master James the Papal Penitentiary, sent by Pope Honorius as legate *a latere* to Scotland and Ireland, to travel through England.[228] The sending of a legate to Scotland may have been amongst the business agreed with Pandulf in August 1219, or as part of the treaty negotiations in June 1220.[229] While it is unlikely that this was, as has been suggested by Professor Duncan, an attempt to extend the papal overlordship of England to Scotland also, the despatching of a legate specifically for Scotland may have been intended to mollify Alexander and convince him of the pope's even-handedness and goodwill towards him. Most likely, it was a move intended to address specifically ecclesiastical issues and to repair bridges after the damage inflicted on Scoto-Papal relations by Guala's handling of the interdict and the absolution of the Scottish clergy. Alexander, however, saw in the legate a possible route to securing one long-standing ambition of the Scots: the elevation of their kingship to the same status as that of the English through the rite of coronation and unction.

Master James first travelled to Ireland and remained there for around two months before crossing to Scotland, probably in late January or early February 1221.[230] During that interval there had been significant advances in the English government's efforts to fulfil its side of the June treaty, principally Pembroke's surrender of Fotheringhay soon after a final royal command to that effect had been issued to the earl on 23 November.[231] When a series of instructions were issued to royal officers on 12 December to deliver various Huntingdon manors into the hands of Ranulf, earl of Chester, during the minority of Earl David's son,[232] the protracted struggle to recover earldom properties from the men who had detained them since 1215 seemed at last to be over. The government's success, however, was short-lived, for before Fotheringhay could be handed over to Alexander's nominated keeper, around 22 January 1221 the castle was seized by Earl William of Aumale.[233]Although Aumale's resistance swiftly collapsed in the face of the government's military preparations, Fotheringhay had still not been handed over to Alexander's representatives before the start of February. Against this long drawn-out business must be set the more rapid resolution of the difficulties experienced in extracting Joan from Hugh de Lusignan; by December 1220 she was back in England, resident at Wallingford in Berkshire[234] and, although no correspondence on the matter survives, it is likely that Henry had moved swiftly to set a date for the long-awaited wedding. Nevertheless, at the time that Master James reached Scotland and opened a council of the Scottish Church at Perth on 9 February,[235] a full eight months on from the agreement reached at York, Alexander had still received no tangible gain. Indeed, it seems only to have been in early March that Alexander was confirmed in full possession of Huntingdon and the formal award of custody of the earldom, clearly already intended in December 1220, was made to Earl Ranulf of Chester.[236] A final resolution of the issues that the June 1220 accord had promised to settle was finally in sight, but the tortuous route by which that point had been reached cannot have convinced Alexander that Henry's government in England was any more trustworthy in its dealings with him than had been John's.

Alexander, too, was again showing ambitions which can only have alarmed the English government. No record of the discussions between Alexander and his spiritual advisors and Master James survives, but it is likely that either at or soon after the Perth council the legate received a request from the king to give him a full coronation. Whatever had been agreed in respect of Alexander's

relationship with the English crown in the tortuous diplomacy which had followed the ending of the war in 1217, he clearly regarded that as neither a just nor a permanent settlement. As his great-grandfather David I before him had attempted to do, Alexander sought to raise his kingship to a par with that of England through the securing of the rites of coronation and unction. Although the Falaise settlement had been overturned by the Quitclaim of Canterbury and the 1209 and 1212 treaties nullified, at least in Pandulf's consideration, by the deal that had been negotiated with Alexander in June 1220, Alexander understood the ambiguities that his submissions to Henry in respect of Huntingdon raised. He was perhaps also keenly aware of deeply held English attitudes towards the status of his kingship. That, however, was not the only possible source of a sense of personal insecurity on Alexander's part. It is possible, too, that he also had an eye to the still-unresolved issue of challenges to his own position as king from dynastic rivals within his kingdom; he was soon to marry a princess whose blood would cast added lustre on the royalty of their children but, given that she was still herself a child, it would be many years before any such children would be in a position to defend their royal heritage. Coronation alone would not remove these foreign attitudes and domestic threats, but it would go a long towards calming Alexander's insecurities. It was perhaps in the hope of receiving a positive response from Rome that on 24 April Alexander sent his cousin Henry of Stirling, and one of his clerks, as envoys to Henry III with an offer to postpone the date of his wedding, should the English king be willing or feel it necessary.[237] Henry's government was in the midst of another period of heightened tension with certain magnates who had grown powerful during the early years of the minority, and Alexander himself may have had political business to deal with in Scotland (see p. 75 below), so Alexander's request may have been entirely innocent and meant in a spirit of friendship and cooperation. In the context of his recent request for coronation, however, it might also be taken as a sign that Alexander hoped to arrive at York with his royal status significantly enhanced and able to force a more satisfactory settlement of his old grievances.

Unwilling to perform the coronation ritual without first receiving papal sanction, Master James wrote to Rome for advice. The legate's letter does not survive, but the undated reply from Pope Honorius does.[238] The response was unequivocal: James was not to involve himself in such matters without the advice and consent of Henry III, his councillors and bishops, for the king of Scots was said to be subject

to the English king. Although it has been suggested that this rebuttal came as a result of lobbying at the papal curia by English representatives,[239] Honorius and his council would have probably been well aware of English claims concerning Scotland stretching back for over a century. In any case, he had worked throughout his pontificate to secure the position of his English royal vassal and maintain the authority of the English crown as it had been enjoyed by King John, and would have been reluctant to make any decision that diminished that authority. For Alexander, it was yet another humiliating rebuff, especially the implication of inferiority in Honorius's letter in its statement that advice on the matter should be sought from the English Church – and this less than three years after the pope had confirmed *Cum universi*.

It is unlikely that Alexander had received news of Honorius's response to Master James before the legate left Scotland,[240] or before he himself set out for his marriage to Joan at York. Although Henry's government was preoccupied with a further series of political tensions, and despite Alexander's offer of a postponement of the wedding day, preparations were in train to receive the Scottish king as he travelled south.[241] On 12 May, a safe-conduct effective for five weeks from 14 June was issued for Alexander and his retinue to travel to York.[242] The following day, the first in a series of instructions was sent out to organise the conducting of the king from the border south, confirming that Alexander was to be accompanied by Walter de Grey, archbishop of York; the earl of Surrey; his old foe in north-west England, Robert de Vieuxpont; and Geoffrey de Neville.[243] Early in June, Alexander entered England, and by 9 June he had reached Thirsk, where he received word that Henry would not be arriving at York until the following week. Rather than kick his heels in the city, he let it be known that he would wait outside York at Easingwold and would enter on the same day as Henry.[244] Finally, on 16 June, Henry received his soon-to-be brother-in-law inside the city. It was not, however, simply to be a festive occasion, for there were further items of important business to settle that were still outstanding from their agreement the previous year. Not least amongst these was the question of Alexander's sisters' marriages, which Henry was committed to arrange within three months of Alexander's marriage to Joan. Henry, or rather his all-powerful and ambitious justiciar Hubert de Burgh, had plans in this regard: Margaret, Alexander's elder sister, would be married to the justiciar.[245] Suggestions that the marriage occurred at the same time as Alexander's to Joan are certainly wrong

– the Melrose Chronicle places the wedding late in its sequence of events for 1221, and thirteenth-century material in Walter Bower's *Scotichronicon* dates the event to 3 October[246] – but it was probably at least proposed at that time.[247] On 18 June, Alexander made a formal settlement of dower lands to the value of £1,000 per annum on his bride, assigning her Jedburgh, Hassendean and Lessudden in the Borders, and Kinghorn and Crail in Fife, the latter two currently portions of his mother's dower lands.[248] The fact that Alexander made additional provision for land and income should Ermengarde not wish to yield up two of her most valuable properties might suggest that there had been little consultation between the two before he had left for York. With satisfactory arrangements in place to provide the next queen of Scots with the income to maintain her own household, the last obstacle to the marriage itself had been removed. The following day, in a splendid ceremony presided over by Archbishop Grey, Alexander and Joan were at last married.[249]

Nearly four years had passed since the ending of the war that Alexander had waged with the ambition of winning back the heritage which he believed had been stolen from his father in 1157, and to force the English king to honour the promises made to the Scots in 1209 and 1212. He had gained no territory or recompense for the tremendous expense of that war, and had failed in almost all of his efforts to win recognition from either the English government or the pope and his representatives for the legitimacy of his unaddressed grievances. His one success, in securing the hand of the eldest of Henry III's sisters, brought a boost to Alexander's personal prestige but little else that was tangible; the Scottish king had been acquitted of the balance of 5,000 merks owing to the English crown under the 1209 and 1212 treaties, but Joan brought nothing else by way of land or money. The fact that he had married a royal princess, full sister of a reigning king of England, did count for much: none of his predecessors had secured so exalted a bride. Any children of that marriage would have the royal blood of England and of Scotland flowing in their veins, something that Alexander would have well understood would increase their standing in the eyes of both their English cousins and the rulers of foreign realms. He hoped yet to boost that standing further by securing the rites of coronation and unction for the Scottish king-making ceremony, symbols of a higher kingship that would finally remove any taint of inferiority from his status. His failure to obtain papal permission for a full coronation ritual, and news of his bid to secure that privilege reaching his brother-in-law's ears, may

quickly have taken the gloss off the new relationship forged on 19 June 1221, but it did not bring an end to the peace between the kingdoms. There were times in the next few years when tensions between Alexander and Henry ran high, but in the immediate aftermath of the ratification of the 1220 treaty, the Scottish king knew that peace with England was secure and that he could turn to the settlement of long-standing problems within his own realm.

FOUR

Master in His Own House, 1215–1235

From the defeat of Donald Bán MacWilliam's rising in the late spring of 1215 until March 1221, there is little surviving detailed evidence for the internal affairs of Alexander's kingdom. As discussed in the previous chapters, Alexander was heavily involved from 1215 with his campaigns against King John and pursuit of his heritage in northern England, and from the late autumn of 1217 in securing an honourable peace settlement with Henry III's government. Across this period there is no surviving evidence for such internal disturbances as had presented challenges to his father's kingship: testimony perhaps to the decisiveness with which William had dealt with the domestic problems that had confronted him in the last two decades of his reign. The swift end to the MacWilliam insurrection in 1215 illustrates how effective had been royal efforts to impose Scottish lordship over the mainland north of Inverness and to align the loyalties of local chieftains with the king of Scots rather than his dynastic rival. The apparent quiescence in Scotland's domestic politics after the crushing of that rising, which the silence of the sources suggests, would certainly have eased Alexander's ability to concentrate on England, but the conflicts and tensions that seem suddenly to emerge in early 1221 cannot have developed in a vacuum. Donald Bán's death had been a singular success, and its circumstances underscored how far the politics of the northern Highlands had changed from their twelfth-century patterns, but there could have been little confidence that the strengthening of Scottish royal authority in the north was permanent. Past peaks of Scottish domination of the north, often in the wake of the destruction of a would-be rival, had been followed by dramatic reverses when a new generation of challengers came of age. There is a high level of interconnectedness in such recurrent conflicts between the major flashpoints – Caithness and Ross, the West Highlands and Islands, and Galloway – a legacy of generations of intermarriage between the ruling dynasties of these regions, of conflicting claims on personal loyalties, and on the rival efforts to achieve mastery over them of different internal and external powers. Each was to present a threat to Alexander's ambitions, both personal and also for his kingship, and each was addressed with a ruthlessness that reflected a new aggressive determination in the assertion of Scottish royal

lordship.

From a peak in the late 1170s and 1180s, when they had won widespread support throughout the kingdom, the MacWilliams' repeated failures to secure their rightful heritage had seen their political credit shrink and their influence contract to scattered redoubts on the margins of the effective reach of royal power.[250] Even from this truncated power base, however, reinforced by the military backing of external powers,[251] they had the ability to mount serious challenges to the regime that King William was striving to construct in the north. Their successful targeting of the symbols of Scottish control – castles, burghs and their colonial inhabitants – encouraged others who were out of sympathy with the innovatory policies of the Scottish crown to throw in their lot with the king's enemies. Indeed, as recently as 1187, disgruntlement with William's policies had seen leading Scottish magnates flirt with the possibility of transferring their allegiance from the king to his MacWilliam rival.[252] Historical hindsight, armed with knowledge of the ultimate failure of the MacWilliams to unseat their kinsmen, has rather diminished our view of the seriousness of their challenge to both William and Alexander after him, but the rapidity with which Alexander had been inaugurated in December 1214 and the sustained disparagement of the reputation and status of his rivals mounted by partisan chroniclers during his reign suggests that no-one dismissed the gravity of the challenge they presented.[253] Regardless of whether the support for the MacWilliams arose from residual loyalty to the heirs of William son of Duncan, or from simple hostility to the extension of intrusive Scottish royal authority into districts previously remote from the centres of royal power, for Alexander it represented a threat to his kingship that had to be eliminated.

What has been described as 'the last great northern rising' began in the weeks immediately following Alexander's accession but continued only into early summer 1215.[254] Our one contemporary account of this affair in the Chronicle of Melrose is frustratingly brief, reporting simply that Donald Bán MacWilliam and his ally Kenneth MacHeth, supported by the un-named son of a 'certain king of Ireland' and a band of 'malignants', had entered Moray only to be intercepted, defeated and killed by one 'Maccintsacairt'.[255] The reference to Moray apart, we have no information as to the location of the main hostilities, the immediate objectives of MacWilliam and his associates, or course of events. There has been much speculation about the

identity of Donald Bán's Irish allies and the motivation for their involvement, but nothing more concrete can be said other than that their presence emphasises the close interrelationship of conflicts extending across the whole region from the northern Highlands of Scotland to the north-west of Ireland.[256] Suggestions that the locus of action was Ross rather than Moray appear to be based on two elements: first, knowledge that by the 1230s 'Maccintsacairt', better known as Ferchar MacTaggart, had his main centre of power in Easter Ross; and, second, modern identification of Moray as the small region extending from Forres and Elgin in the coastal plain down the Spey valley into the central Highlands, rather than the medieval province which stretched west from the Spey almost to the Atlantic coast. There is no suggestion that MacTaggart attacked the invaders on his 'home' soil, simply that he took the offensive against them. So rapid was the crushing of the insurrection that Alexander seems not to have moved north against it before news came south of its end. Alexander's gratitude for this outstanding service was expressed in the knighting of Ferchar, an act which distinguished him from the wider body of Gaelic chieftains in the north and marked him out as the king's agent in the region.

Ferchar MacTaggart's promotion by Alexander was just the most recent of a series of royal acts to secure a dramatic transformation of the old political structures and alliances in the country west and north of Inverness that began in the last years of King William's reign. The change had begun in spring 1202, when after decades of conflict William had at last reached a settlement with Harald Maddadsson, earl of Caithness and Orkney. This deal confirmed the earl in sole possession of his mainland territory under the Scottish king's lordship.[257] The chronicle records of this event focus on the financial terms by which Harald's possession of Caithness was agreed, but his submission seems also to have involved an agreement to end his family's claim to lands in Ross. Enhancement of Scottish influence in the firthlands between Inverness and Loch Fleet on the south-east coast of Sutherland occurred in the decade after the 1202 treaty, when a substantial block of land stretching from Skelbo west to Invershin appears in the hands of Hugh Freskin, son of a Flemish colonist who had been given Duffus in Moray in the time of David I. Some time before 1211, Hugh gave this Sutherland property to his kinsman Gilbert de Moravia, archdeacon of Moray, who between 1211 and 1214 received a confirmation of his possession from King William.[258] This confirmation should perhaps be seen in the context of William's

last northward journey in summer 1214, when he settled a fresh deal with Harald's son and successor, Earl Jón, which seems to have ensured the final separation of the earls of Caithness and Orkney from their support for the MacWilliam cause.

To what extent William's efforts to establish stability in the country north of the Cromarty Firth saw parallel development of new political structures in the Great Glen region is the subject of some debate. It is possible that the realignment of indigenous Gaelic powers with the interests of the Scottish crown represented by Ferchar MacTaggart in Ross was part of a wider movement which saw established native leaders recognise the new political reality of Scottish mastery. Native kindreds in the Aird west of Inverness, and through the districts extending south and west of Strathfarrar, may have joined Ferchar in his embracing of the new prescription.[259] William had been building new royal castles as forward posts of his power on the fringes of this region since at least 1179,[260] but it is possible that the last decade of his reign saw the creation of a series of new territorial lordships alongside them. Hard evidence for the settlement of knightly colonists in such lordships, in the form of charters, is lacking, but the sudden appearance of foreign families in control of major landed estates there in the 1220s is strongly suggestive of their establishment in the previous decade.[261] It was perhaps still a shallowly rooted edifice, but it represented a dramatic transformation from earlier crown policies aimed at pacification of the north which had depended on kinship bonds and personal alliances.[262] Deprived of powerful backers and their military resources within mainland Scotland, confronted by locally based colonial agents of the Scottish crown, and with the native leadership transferring their allegiance to Alexander, a turning point had been reached in the MacWilliams' long struggle for their heritage.

Confidence in the security of the new prescription for the government of the north that the emergence of Ferchar represented allowed Alexander to concentrate his energies on the war against King John. Although no record evidence survives for northern affairs in the years 1215 to 1220, it is likely that Ferchar used his new status as the king's strongman in Ross to extend his personal authority across the region. Indeed, Alexander was probably happy to leave such a distant and relatively unprofitable conflict to a willing deputy whilst he pursued his own ambitions in potentially more rewarding fields. Later evidence for the extension of Ferchar's activities westwards across

Ross and into the adjacent islands, territory that fell under the lordship of the Manx king, hints that the silence of the chronicle sources masks a sustained campaign of expansion which brought him into collision with other regional powers. It is perhaps in the context of a northern emergency triggered by Ferchar's aggressive expansion of the sphere of Scottish power that Alexander's proposed postponement of his marriage in April 1221 should be seen. The previous month he had returned to Perth from a campaign based at Inverness, and there he made arrangements for punitive fines against men who had failed to provide their required service in his army.[263] We do not know if Alexander's return south marked the end of the action or simply the end of his personal involvement, but the presence on his journey to York in late May/early June of his justiciar of Scotia – William Comyn, earl of Buchan, a man who later can be seen serving as his military lieutenant in the north – might suggest that the emergency had ended.[264] On the other hand, the apparent absence from the marriage ceremony of his constable, Alan of Galloway, and Alan's younger brother Thomas, earl of Atholl, is however suggestive of continuing operations that were more than simply the private initiatives of the independent-minded lord of Galloway. The target of the royal campaign had been a certain Donald son of Neil, a man about whom we know nothing certain beyond his name. It is tempting, however, to identify him as another of the 'sons of Niall', chieftains from the northern part of the kingdom of Man and the Isles who were prominent supporters of the Lewis-based Óláfr Guðrøðarsson and his son, Haraldr, in the following decade.[265] This obscure episode, then, may be the first action in a conflict which drew first Ferchar, then Alan and Thomas of Galloway, and finally Alexander himself into a major war in the Hebrides.

If we can trust the fourteenth-century chronicler John of Fordun's interpretation of his now lost thirteenth-century record of Alexander's reign, the king personally led another campaign in 1221, this time in what was apparently the first of two campaigns in successive years into Argyll.[266] The timing of this campaign immediately after Alexander and Joan returned from York in the last week of June is strongly suggestive of an agreement between Alexander and the English government, but operations may have commenced in advance of the king's journey south for his marriage. It appears that it was a naval campaign in the west that possibly prevented the Galloway brothers from attending the wedding ceremony and, while Alan operated as an effectively independent power in his own domain, it is

unlikely that such an action had been conducted without Alexander's sanction. Alan and Thomas may have been keen to revive their interests in Ulster, where Henry had recently reinstated their possession of the extensive territories awarded to them by his father. For his part, Alexander perhaps saw an opportunity to reinvigorate the drive to impose Scottish lordship over mainland Argyll and the Clyde islands which had stalled in 1204 following the death of Alan son of Walter, the Steward, and the succession of his probably under-age son, Walter II son of Alan. According to Fordun, Alexander gathered an army from Lothian, Galloway and neighbouring provinces and sailed to Argyll, information suggestive of operations around the Firth of Clyde and Kintyre. The presence at Kilwinning of Thomas of Galloway with tenants from his Lothian estates points to a muster of the royal levy at the Clyde ports of Irvine or Ayr,[267] perhaps for onward transportation by Alan's fleet. Alexander's own participation in the campaign was curtailed by bad weather; storms scattered his ships but he, according to Fordun, made his way safely to Glasgow. There is, however, a three-month window in which this campaign could have been organised, mounted and dispersed, for there is otherwise no secure evidence for Alexander's location between his return from York in June and 15 October when he was at Elgin;[268] this, then, had been no mere summer cruise down the Clyde.

Although Alexander's own involvement may have been cut short by summer storms, wider naval actions conducted in the course of 1221 were of major benefit to English interests in the west of Ireland. This result was probably not a coincidence and can be seen as a return to the cooperative actions which had occurred in the aftermath of the Anglo-Scottish treaty of 1212, when Alan and Thomas of Galloway had attacked King John's enemies in west Ulster.[269] In 1221, naval action again occurred far outside the Clyde estuary, with Thomas leading his ships against a fleet raised in the Hebrides by Diarmait Ua Conchobair, a grandson of the mid-twelfth-century Irish high king Tairdelbach ua Conchobair.[270] Diarmait was a claimant to his grandfather's kingship of Connacht in western Ireland, held at that date by his kinsman Cathal Crobderg ua Conchobair, who since 1215 had been a vassal of the English crown. Cathal was not the most obedient of vassals, but in 1221 the English government in Ireland could not risk the consequences of standing by and permitting him to be overthrown by a kinsman who stood in no dependent relationship with King Henry.[271] Thomas intercepted Diarmait's fleet somewhere between the southern Hebrides and the north-west coast of Ireland,

killing the pretender.

Thomas's victory ended a serious threat to the stability of the English political settlement of western Ireland and, presumably, justified in English eyes the Galloway brothers' restoration to the Ulster territories they had received from King John a decade earlier. What, though, had Alexander's own campaigning achieved? The somewhat circumstantial evidence of Fordun's account has led to the assumption that the king's principal target was Ruaidhri mac Raonaill, a grandson of Sumarliði, the great mid-twelfth-century ruler of Argyll and the Isles.[272] Ruaidhri had been an associate of Thomas of Galloway in 1212 and 1214 during the latter's campaigns in west Ulster,[273] but his status as the leading Clann Somhairle dynast in the 1210s, and as a potential obstacle to Scottish schemes to assert royal authority in Argyll and the Isles, probably far outweighed his usefulness as a military ally in Alexander's eyes. Ruaidhri is styled specifically as lord of Kintyre in the early 1200s,[274] and it seems that it was his lordship in the peninsula that extends down the western side of the Firth of Clyde that was Alexander's immediate target in this first campaign. But was domination of Ruaidhri's mainland Scottish territory Alexander's only aim? It has been suggested that an attack on Ruaidhri was only a means to an end, and that the main objective of Alexander's western campaigns was the destabilisation of a reunified kingdom of Man and the Isles; a weak and divided kingdom, albeit one from which disorder had a distressing tendency to spill over into mainland Scotland, was preferable to a strong and united one.[275] This argument suggests that a rapprochement between the Manx dynasty, represented by King Rögnvaldr Guðrøðarson, and the descendents of Sumarliði, headed by his grandson Ruaidhri mac Raonaill, was the catalyst for this action, and proposes that the marriage of Rögnvaldr to a kinswoman of Ruaidhri might have sealed the alliance. Given that the son of that marriage, Guðrøðr, was an adult in 1223 and had fathered at least one son by that date, then the marriage had probably occurred shortly after 1200. A possible reunification of the kingdom through the leading member of Clann Somhairle's recognition of the kingship of Rögnvaldr, however, need not have happened that early. Indeed, if there is a likely window of opportunity for such an agreement it was following the death of Aonghus son of Sumarliði and his three sons in 1210, when the balance of power in the Isles was radically reconfigured.[276] Out of the wreckage of this event, it is proposed, Ruaidhri emerged as the dominant Clann Somhairle warlord, and he ended nearly sixty years of conflict between the rival

claimants to the kingship of the Isles by acknowledging Rögnvaldr's kingship in return for recognition of his status as a leading magnate of the kingdom. Given that the bulk of Ruaidhri's territory lay on the Scottish mainland, an accommodation between him and Rögnvaldr, which saw Ruaidhri recognise the kingship of the Manx ruler, was a challenge to Scottish claims to the overlordship of Argyll that Alexander could not afford to ignore. This new relationship, it is argued, prompted the Scots' release of Rögnvaldr's half-brother Óláfr in 1214 as a wrecking move.[277] Instead of triggering a civil war, however, the Guðrøðarson brothers established a compromise peace that lasted into the 1220s. Now that Alexander was disentangled from the war in England, however, he could explore new ways to diminish the power of these Argyll-based and Hebridean sea-kings.

Baulked by storms from achieving that objective in 1221, Alexander mounted a second and much briefer operation in early summer 1222.[278] The chronicle accounts tell us that the campaign started after Whitsun (22 May) – he was at Scone on 15 May[279] – and was over by the first week of July, for on 10 July the king was at Roxburgh, a tight but not unfeasible timeframe.[280] The operation appears to have been a resounding success, with some of the Argyllmen surrendering hostages and cash fines for peace and others, un-named, fleeing before him. According to Fordun's source, Alexander then rewarded those who had followed him with the land and goods of the men who had fled before he returned homewards with his army. Amongst the business that Alexander dealt with at Jedburgh on his return from campaign was the granting of a burgh charter to Dumbarton – the port and settlement beside the great rock fortress at the point where the tidal reach of the Clyde begins to open out into the Firth – which lends strong support for the argument that this second operation led to the consolidation of Scottish control over the peninsulas and islands of southern Argyll and the outer Clyde estuary.[281] Dumbarton had previously been held by the earl of Lennox, a man associated closely with the Stewarts, and its resumption into royal hands may have signalled Alexander's determination that the lands around the head of the firth were to be under royal domination rather than act as a theatre for magnate ambitions. To its west was Cowal, a peninsula into which the Stewarts had been extending their influence from their main base at Renfrew on the Clyde. Reference to a royal constable at Dunoon in south-eastern Cowal shortly after this time might indicate that this territory, too, had been brought under royal control.[282] A key component in such a wider scheme for royal

domination of the region seems to have been the founding of a castle on the heights overlooking East Loch Tarbert at the head of Kintyre, commanding the porterage across the narrow isthmus where tradition averred that the great eleventh-century Norwegian king Magnus Barelegs had been dragged in his galley.[283] From Tarbert, Knapdale and the upper reaches of the great sea-loch of Loch Fyne could be dominated with ease, as could Kintyre itself and the islands on either side of it. Equally important, however, the heartland of Argyll in Lorn was now placed within reach of Alexander's lieutenants. Royal agents were installed in three new bases placed strategically around the head of the Firth of Clyde and, it would seem, more dependable men had been installed into the lands once held by Ruaidhri mac Raonaill. Again the evidence is circumstantial, but it is probable that he had been one of the un-named men who had fled from Alexander's wrath in 1222. In his place it has been claimed that Alexander perhaps established Ruaidhri's brother Domhnall, whose Mhic Domhnaill descendents held land in Kintyre into the sixteenth century,[284] but there is no evidence to suggest that the brothers had been rivals to the degree that Domhnall would have been likely to have sided with the Scottish king to oust his brother from his patrimony. Quite simply, he had perhaps followed the line of least resistance and submitted to Alexander, whilst his brother had taken to his ships to fight another day.

Whatever the role of Domhnall might have been in Alexander's schemes to divide and rule in the West, greater significance might be attributed to the emergence at this time of the Mac Dubhghaill lordship of Argyll. Descended from Dubhghall son of Sumarliði, a grandson of the mid-twelfth-century Manx king Óláfr I, this branch of Clann Somhairle had held the title of 'king of the Isles' in the 1150s but had sunk into relative obscurity after Sumarliði's death in 1164. In *c.*1225, Dubhghall's surviving son, Donnchadh, re-emerges in the historical record as a witness to a charter of Maoldomhnaidh, earl of Lennox to the monks of Paisley Abbey.[285] His appearance in association with a man who formed part of the wider network of political relationships forged in Argyll and the Clyde estuary zone by the Stewarts raises the possibility that he was also a member of that network. Indeed, over the next two decades Donnchadh featured prominently as a key supporter of Alexander in the west, a baron of Scotland and a man well integrated within the web of social and political bonds that united the magnates of the Scottish realm. Although the evidence is still very circumstantial, it has been

suggested that Donnchadh was a beneficiary of his cousin's fall, either being inserted into the lordship of Argyll by Alexander, or stepping into the power vacuum created by the displacement of Ruaidhri and regaining the headship of the kindred as a result.[286] Not only had Ruaidhri been ousted from his base in mainland Argyll, Alexander apparently had replaced him with a vassal who gave him a more immediate presence in a region where royal influence had been weak since the 1160s. With just two short campaigns, Alexander seemed to have transformed the political structures of a region that had troubled his ancestors since the early 1100s. Ruaidhri, however, had eluded his grasp and had not come to any accommodation with him. Alexander had achieved much, but all could yet be overturned.

In early July 1222, Alexander may have looked on the achievement of the previous two years with a great degree of satisfaction. The west had been daunted, and royal domination stamped firmly on territories which had long lain beyond the grasp of the Scottish crown. It was perhaps with equal satisfaction in the certainty of the reach and effectiveness of his authority across all of mainland Scotland that around this time he presided over the settlement of a long-running dispute concerning payment of teinds between Adam, bishop of Caithness and the men of his diocese.[287] According to the well-informed English Dunstable chronicler, the dispute was in particular over the teind of hay but a deal had been agreed by both Adam and Earl Jón before the king.[288] That business concluded, and with his kingdom apparently at peace, Alexander intended to travel south into England. On 13 August he received a safe-conduct to go on pilgrimage to the shrine of St Thomas at Canterbury and to have a meeting with his brother-in-law.[289] Probably in the last week of September, Alexander came south to Jedburgh and halted to make some last preparations before his journey into England. There, he was caught by messengers bringing news of a shocking atrocity in Caithness: the men of the province had murdered their bishop.[290]

Bishop Adam's murder was electrifying news. Not only was it an act of outrageous sacrilege, it also shook the whole edifice of Scottish political control over the far north of the mainland. Adam, a former abbot of Melrose, had been elected to the see of Caithness in 1213 and consecrated in May 1214, his elevation coinciding with the settlement that King William agreed with Earl Jón of Caithness and Orkney.[291] He was clearly a royal place-man, and there is little sign that Adam hurried north to take possession of his diocese.[292] As a former

Cistercian, it is possible that he was identified with the defiance of the interdict laid on Scotland by Guala which resulted in spiritual sanctions against the Order in Scotland. It was perhaps for that reason, rather than any role as the king's agent and a supporter of royal policy, that he travelled to Rome in 1218 to secure absolution from Pope Honorius.[293] Fines imposed for his defiance of papal mandates may have been the cause of the aggressive pursuit of his rights to additional teind income which led to the presentation of the dispute between Adam and the men of Caithness before Alexander in 1222. Whatever the rights and wrongs in the case, armed with the king's judgement in his favour Adam had returned to his see and set about collecting what he regarded as his rightful dues. On 11 September, the bishop was at the episcopal manor of Halkirk, just south of Thurso in Caithness, when he was confronted by an angry crowd of free-peasant farmers who were complaining at the burden of teind being imposed upon them. When he refused to make them any concession, the farmers began to attack the bishop and his attendants, killing one of his chaplains, Serlo, a former Newbattle monk, and driving Adam into his manor house, which they then set alight, burning him to death inside.[294] While the Melrose Chronicle's account is more interested in establishing the cause and manner of his death, surely with a view to seeking the canonisation of a Cistercian martyr, more details of the events at Halkirk are contained in the thirteenth-century *Gesta Annalia* narrative preserved in the later work of Fordun and Bower, and also in contemporary English sources. *Gesta Annalia* reports that Earl Jón, who was staying close by (possibly at Braal Castle across the river from the church at Halkirk), saw the gathering crowd and the beginning of the riot, but when approached for assistance by Adam's servants had ignored their appeal and did nothing to save the bishop, who was killed along with his chaplain and another un-named servant. For that reason, it suggests, it was believed widely that Jón was complicit in the crime.[295] The annals of Dunstable report that Adam had secured attachment of Jón's as well as the king's seal on the charter recording the decree which settled the dispute over the hay teinds and that this had provoked the earl to fury. It goes so far as to accuse him of an active role in the deaths of Serlo, the servant (now identified as the bishop's nephew) and Adam himself.[296]

Why might Earl Jón at the very least simply have stood by while Bishop Adam and his companions were being murdered? After all, Jón had accepted Scottish royal overlordship in 1214 and may as recently as July or August 1222 signalled recognition of Alexander's lordship

over him in the judgement on the teind dispute. He cannot, either, have been in any doubt that Adam was Alexander's agent in the far north mainland. Nevertheless, there were many developments since 1214 that might well have given Jón cause to regret his submission, not least the emergence of Ferchar as a new power in Ross, where the earl's family possessed claims to lordship, and likewise the establishment and spread of de Moravia power from their lordship of Skelbo in Sutherland. Jón might not have actively planned Adam's gruesome end, but he probably saw more advantages than risks for him in the removal of a pushy bishop who was all too closely identified with the imposition of foreign lordship within his earldom. He possibly calculated that Alexander, whom he would have known from the time of the court judgement was preparing to go on pilgrimage, would be unwilling or – given the lateness of the season – unable to respond; and, if there were no suggestion of his own complicity in the outrage, Alexander might perhaps even delegate the task of finding and punishing Adam's murderers to him. Unfortunately for Jón, he was to be sadly mistaken in any such calculation.

Abandoning his planned trip to England, Alexander, who was described by Pope Honorius as 'a champion of God', gathered an army and marched north.[297] The Dunstable annalist reported that Jón fled from Caithness on news of Alexander's approach and 'roamed about the islands of the sea'; he had presumably crossed into Orkney. *Gesta Annalia* gives no hint of a flight, recording simply that he met the king and cleared himself of complicity in the killings with the support of oath-takers. All accounts, however, agree that Alexander was determined to make a memorable demonstration of his power, forcing the earl into a humiliating display of submission and exacting a terrible retribution on the men who were believed to have been involved in the violence. *Gesta Annalia* records that, because Jón had made no effort to prevent the crime, Alexander confiscated a great part of Caithness from him as well as imposing a punitive cash fine. Alexander also required the earl to identify and hand over many of the men who had been in the mob, and these men were then maimed by having limbs cut off.[298] Dunstable offers yet more detail, claiming that Jón agreed that he and his heirs would pay forever the teinds that had lain behind the dispute, and that he would bring to the king within six months the heads of all of the men responsible for the murders. In addition, he resigned half of his earldom to Alexander and, as penance, gave further lands to the church of Caithness. Finally, he promised to go on pilgrimage to Rome and to accept the pope's

mandate concerning the affair.[299] Honorius III's letter to the bishops of St Andrews, Glasgow, Dunkeld and Dunblane in the aftermath of the campaign corroborates certain of this additional detail, and adds that sentence of excommunication had been passed on the perpetrators, and that their lands had been laid under interdict.[300] Although he is not named in the letter, excommunication and interdict might lie behind Dunstable's reference to Jón's penitential pilgrimage to Rome. Icelandic reports of the incident also record the maiming of the perpetrators, noting that eighty men who had been present had their hands and feet lopped off, several dying from their injuries.[301] It was a shocking display of Alexander's military superiority, strategic skill and personal ruthlessness, designed to leave the men of Caithness in no doubt as to the ability of the Scottish king to march at will into their territory and exact terrible punishments for crimes against his peace. Jón had been forced into an abject surrender, which revealed his powerlessness in the face of his Scottish overlord; Alexander had achieved in the space of two months what his father had laboured for over twenty years to secure. He knew, however, that he needed quickly to introduce a new royal agent into the north as a replacement for Bishop Adam, and that a man with local connections and access to the sinews of coercive power was needed. 'In the presence of the lord king and the chief men of his army', the man elected by the canons of Caithness to fill Adam's place was Gilbert de Moravia, archdeacon of Moray and lord of Skelbo.[302] Alexander, surely, had made certain that the diocesan clergy had elected the 'right' man, a member of one of the most powerful of the colonial families and who could rely on their ample military resources to enforce his authority. His task complete, Alexander marched south through the dreadful early winter weather and was back at Roxburgh by 30 November, but he returned north at least as far as Kincardine at the south end of the Mounth route into Moray by 22 December.[303]

As a coda to the events at Halkirk, the following December Earl Jón completed his submission and rehabilitation with Alexander. At the king's Christmas court at Forfar, the earl redeemed the lands which had been taken from him as part of the penalty for Adam's death through a substantial cash payment.[304] The *Gesta Annalia* author stated that this was an unpopular decision and that Alexander had received bad counsel,[305] a view which perhaps reflects more the opinion of a clerical writer rather than that of the lay councillors around the king. Jón had clearly learned the lesson writ large in the events of the previous year, and understood that the northern

fastnesses which had served his father so well for so long no longer had the ability to defy the Scottish king. Royal power was not now a remote threat, but was a very real and terrible presence on the doorstep of his earldom. Through his forceful action in autumn 1222, Alexander had effectively ended the long tradition of Caithness involvement in northern insurrections which challenged the ruling Scottish royal house. Given the storms that the aggressive intrusion of his power into the west in 1221 and summer 1222 had left brewing, it was perhaps fortunate that this last Caithness-based disturbance never developed into full-blown rebellion.

Possible threats of disorder in the west may have taken Alexander to Ayr in early May 1223.[306] An undated letter of around March/April 1223 from the young Queen Joan to her brother perhaps gives a clue to the business which drew him back to the principal royal base on the outer Firth of Clyde; there are references to the campaigns against the English government in Ireland being waged by Hugh de Lacy, former earl of Ulster, now allied with his old foe Áed Méith ua Néill, in his efforts to regain his earldom.[307] Alexander, she reported to her brother, had promised her that he would not allow any military aid to be given to Hugh from within his kingdom, and he had assured her that if any such support was offered he would do his utmost to intercept it. Any such aid, we can assume, would be expected to come from the mercenary kindreds of the west coast, against whom Alexander had been active in the two previous years. Ruaidhri mac Raonaill, perhaps, might be attracted to offer his service to Hugh – an enemy of Henry III, the Galloway brothers and, by extension, Alexander – as a means of restoring something of his damaged personal prestige. In addition to her reference to the wars in Ireland, Joan also mentioned a rumour of Norwegian intervention in the west. This she linked to Hugh de Lacy's invasion, but other evidence suggests that King Hakon IV's interests may have been directed more to another incipient crisis in the region: the escalating conflict between the Guðrøðarssons in the kingdom of Man and the Isles.

In the event, when the storm broke that summer it was neither Ulster nor the Isles which directly affected Alexander, but another insurrection in support of the MacWilliams. When the crisis erupted, Alexander was in England on an extended visit which lasted for several weeks after mid-June. In July he and Joan made the pilgrimage to Canterbury, which he had been forced to abandon the previous autumn, and then he attended a parliament at Worcester.[308]

According to the *Gesta Annalia* source, on his return 'around autumn' from Henry III's court after this pilgrimage he was forced to make his way hurriedly to Moray. Walter Bower in the fifteenth century saw as the reason for this that 'some wicked men of the race of MacWilliam' had mounted a rising in 'the furthest limits of Scotland'.[309] The leaders of this rising were named as 'Gillescop' (Gaelic: Gilleasbuig) and his sons, and a certain 'Roderic'. The latter has been identified with Ruaidhri mac Raonaill, an identification that is accepted in most recent discussions of the period but that is altogether more uncertain than the historical narratives imply.[310] Bower claims that they 'strove to overwhelm the kingdom by force', but they had been all delivered into Alexander's hands and subjected to summary justice. In 1228, however, Bower mentions that another 'Gillescop' was active in the Great Glen district, and that in 1229 he and his two sons were defeated and beheaded.[311] To further confuse matters, the Lanercost Chronicle recorded that in 1230 'certain wicked men of the race of MacWilliam' and a certain 'Roderic' had 'raised up treachery in the remotest territories of Scotland'.[312] The compiler of the Lanercost Chronicle certainly had access to the same text of the *Gesta* used by Bower, but one or the other has seriously distorted the chronology for the MacWilliam rising – unless the thirteenth-century source was referring to an extended rising lasting from 1223–1229/30 and if Bower has introduced confusion by linking Alexander's dash to Moray with a MacWilliam rising and with his reference to summary justice in 1223.[313]

If the reason for Alexander's visit to Moray in the latter part of 1223 was not to tackle yet another MacWilliam insurrection, what pressing business might have demanded his attention? The probable cause was the ambition of Ferchar MacTaggart to use his position as the king's strongman in the north to extend his regional influence westwards from the core of his power in Easter Ross. It is unlikely that he had been operating entirely without Alexander's knowledge and at least tacit support, but his actions had unforeseen consequences. To understand the roots of the situation into which Ferchar had intruded himself, it is necessary to make a short digression in order to outline events which began nearly forty years earlier with the death of King Guðrøðr II of Man and the Isles in 1187, and the arrangements made for the succession to the Manx kingship. The throne was taken by the elder of the sons of Guðrøðr, Rögnvaldr, who was already a young adult. He was, however, canonically illegitimate, something that may not have mattered much in past generations but which by the late

twelfth century was being raised as a serious legal impediment to inheritance of paternal properties. His younger half-brother Óláfr, who was still a child, was the progeny of Guðrøðr's canonical marriage and, therefore, in the eyes of the Church and many of the people of the kingdom, the legitimate heir. He was, however, a child and the more mature Rögnvaldr was able to secure the throne for himself.[314] Later correspondence between Óláfr and Henry III of England implies that Rögnvaldr's tenure of the kingdom had been intended as wardship until his half-brother was of age to rule for himself, but that he had seized the throne and assumed the kingship.[315] This argument may well be special pleading designed to legitimise Óláfr's own bid for the throne, but the account of events set out in the *Chronicle of the Kings of Man and the Isles* suggest that Rögnvaldr might indeed have been intended to function as a temporary lieutenant but had usurped his brother's right.[316] By 1208/9, Óláfr was an adult and was ruling as under-king for Rögnvaldr in the northern portion of the kingdom in Lewis. He was, however, pressing for at least a greater and more profitable share in the kingdom and, failing to secure what he regarded as his birthright from Rögnvaldr, had turned to the Norwegian king, Ingi Bárðarson, offering him his submission in return for aid in wresting the throne from his half-brother.[317] But Rögnvaldr struck first, capturing Óláfr. Instead of blinding and castrating him in the time-honoured tradition of symbolically and literally neutralising a dynastic enemy, Rögnvaldr handed him over to King William for imprisonment in Scotland. Why he did so is not entirely clear: perhaps it was part of a deal negotiated by Rögnvaldr which gained him Scottish support to offset the Norwegian support sought by Óláfr; perhaps it was in some way bound up with the current war in Ireland being fought by King John. Óláfr remained in prison in Scotland until late in 1214 when, according to the Manx Chronicle, the dying King William ordered the release of all prisoners. As discussed above, this act may have been no straightforward amnesty and was instead intended by the Scots to stir up discord in the kingdom of the Isles. Returning to Man, however, Óláfr made peace with his brother and immediately departed on pilgrimage to Compostella in Spain. On his return, Rögnvaldr arranged for his marriage to 'Lauon', sister of his own wife, the daughter of 'a certain nobleman of Kintyre', and sent back north to Lewis as sub-king. Although there is no firm identification of that Kintyre nobleman, it seems that Lauon's father was either Rögnvaldr/Ragnall son of Sumarliði or his son, Ruaidhri mac Raonaill. If that is the case, then Scottish attempts to use Óláfr as

a tool to counter a rapprochement between Rögnvaldr and Ruaidhri had evidently failed; Óláfr had been bound into that same Man–Argyll nexus. After some years of marriage to Lauon, however, in *c*.1221/2 Óláfr had repudiated her, supposedly because he had previously had a sexual relationship with her cousin, which was somehow regarded as rendering his marriage invalid on the grounds of consanguinity. This explanation appears to be a somewhat contrived excuse for what was a political calculation by Óláfr; Alexander's recent naval campaigns in the West had revealed Lauon's kinsmen to be a liability rather than an asset. Showing clearly where he believed the real power now lay, Óláfr quickly remarried, this time to Christina, daughter of Ferchar MacTaggart.

According to the chronicle account, Lauon's sister, the queen of Man and the Isles, stirred up the old enmity between her husband and his half-brother. Furthermore, she incited her son, Guðrøðr, who was based in Skye, to avenge this insult to his aunt. Gathering his men, Guðrøðr sailed across to Lewis, devastating the island and killing several of his uncle's men, but Óláfr himself escaped in a small boat and made his way to his father-in-law in Scotland. He was soon joined in Ferchar's household by Pál Balkisson, vicecomes of Skye, 'an energetic man, and powerful in the whole kingdom of the Isles', who was opposed to Guðrøðr and who had defied his order to attack Óláfr. With Ferchar acting as an intermediary, the two Islesmen agreed to ally against Guðrøðr, and in 1223 they returned to Skye, captured him and subsequently blinded and castrated him. Although the Manx chronicler claims that the mutilation of Guðrøðr was done by Pál against his uncle's wishes, there can be little doubt that Óláfr had intended to send a signal to King Rögnvaldr that he intended to wrest his birthright from his half-brother's lineage, by violence and bloodshed if necessary. Behind all these developments stands the figure of Ferchar MacTaggart, whose grandchildren might one day rule in the Isles. The *Chronicle of the Kings of Man and the Isles* presents him as an honest broker, but there is an altogether more Machiavellian colouring to his manoeuvres in the early 1220s. Ferchar, it appears, had precipitated civil war in the Isles, despite the fact that King Rögnvaldr was an ally of Alan of Galloway and, through him, with Alexander II and Henry III in the conflict in Ireland. It was into this messy tangle that Alexander stepped when he hurried north in autumn 1223.

Ireland and the Isles had surely been discussed when Alexander

and Henry had met in the summer. Towards the end of 1222, Hugh de Lacy, the former earl of Ulster, had been in England in an attempt to negotiate his restoration to the lands and titles of which he had been stripped in 1210. Negotiations had failed and the mounting threat posed by de Lacy and his Uí Néill allies was preoccupying the English government and his Irish administration, their anxiety reflected in a string of instructions to royal tenants-in-chief in the north of Ireland to put their defences in order.[318] Amongst those instructions, on 18 July Henry had commanded Thomas of Galloway, earl of Atholl, who had the keepership of the royal castle of Antrim, to guard it carefully against the coming of de Lacy and, if he were not already in Ulster, to go there in person to defend it.[319] The direction of so senior a member of the Scottish noble community to go in person to Ireland must surely have been agreed with Alexander. Later in the year, it emerges that Alan of Galloway had also been active with his fleet, 'going from island to island with his army in his galleys' but nevertheless ready to cross to Ireland to serve Henry III or, rather, to protect his extensive property interests in eastern Ulster.[320] Alan's letter to Henry giving this information is frustratingly vague, but it appears that he had been active throughout 1224 in the western seas, perhaps involved in naval actions intended to bolster the position of his and his brother's ally, King Rögnvaldr. Alan's commitment to action in the Isles may have limited his ability to defend his Irish interests. Certainly, in spring 1224, English efforts to contain Hugh de Lacy failed and most of Ulster was under his control. While Antrim had not fallen, Thomas of Galloway's own castle at Coleraine had been captured and destroyed in an act which underscored how his role in Ulster was understood by both de Lacy and Áed Méith ua Néill.[321] To combat de Lacy more effectively, Henry III's regents appointed the most powerful of the Anglo-Irish lords, William Marshal, earl of Pembroke and lord of Leinster, as justiciar of Ireland, and sent him to take the offensive. In an eight-week campaign, Pembroke swept all before him, breaking Hugh de Lacy's siege of Carrickfergus and capturing Walter de Lacy's great fortress of Trim in Meath. Although Hugh himself did not submit until the following year, the emergency in Ireland was effectively over by mid-August 1224.[322] Rumours of a peace between Earl William and Hugh de Lacy and of a proposal for a reconciliation of Hugh with the English king were enough to send the Galloway brothers into a panicky correspondence with Henry's government, fearful for the fate of the lands which they had been awarded by King John from the former properties of de Lacy.[323] Caught between the conflicting

demands of Alexander's support for Henry III in Ireland, the confrontation between Rögnvaldr and Óláfr in the Isles, and the need to counter the growing influence of Ferchar, Scottish policy in the Isles as pursued by Alan and Thomas of Galloway was caught in an impossible ménage.

With Alan and Thomas of Galloway increasingly preoccupied with the threat to their Ulster interests, it was perhaps fortunate for Alexander that the threatened eruption of full-blown civil war in the Isles found a temporary compromise. While it is possible that his hurried visit to the north in autumn 1223 had resulted in a rap on the knuckles for Ferchar and a warning from Alexander to cease his mischief-making, it is equally possible that it may actually have seen the king reward Ferchar for his actions with the bestowal on him of the earldom of Ross.[324] After all, Ferchar's support had probably seen a significant extension of Scottish influence into the Hebrides, and the first half of 1224 seems to have seen Óláfr tighten his grip on these northern island components of the kingdom of Man and the Isles; it seems unlikely that his father-in-law was a complete bystander in this process and had perhaps been encouraged to do so by Alexander. It was perhaps this steady erosion of Rögnvaldr's position in the northern portion of his kingdom which had seen Alan's summer war-cruise 'from island to island'. His diversion towards the war in Ulster may have been the moment that provided Óláfr with an opening to exploit. According to the Manx Chronicle, that summer Óláfr took hostages from all of the leading men of the islands and sailed south with a fleet of thirty-two ships to confront his half-brother. The result was a negotiated settlement, whereby Rögnvaldr agreed to a more equitable division of the kingdom, which left him with the title of king, the Isle of Man, and a share in the Hebridean islands, the remainder being assigned to his brother.[325] Alexander appeared to have won whichever result was delivered, for both the Galloway's ally and Ferchar's protégé now dominated the southern and northern portions of the Western Isles respectively.

The peace which this settlement delivered was short-lived, perhaps inevitably so since it seems to have made no provision for any kind of compensation for the mutilation of Rögnvaldr's son. While we must always bear in mind the strongly pro-Óláfr line taken by the Manx Chronicle, it does appear to have been Rögnvaldr who precipitated the renewed crisis. According to the chronicle account, in 1225 Rögnvaldr set out for the northern part of the kingdom in company with Alan of

Galloway, with the intention of depriving his half-brother of everything that had been conceded to him the previous year. Not only was this pitching the Maxmen against the Islesmen, but it also threw two of Alexander's principal commanders into direct collision with each other, for Alan was now openly taking action against Ferchar's son-in-law. Again, the threatened clash failed to materialise, for many of the Manx refused to fight against either Óláfr or their northern kinsmen, forcing Rögnvaldr and his allies to withdraw. Shortly after this abortive campaign, Rögnvaldr left Man ostensibly to go to the court of Henry III, but instead sailing across to Galloway where he forged a closer alliance with Alan, to whose young illegitimate son he married his daughter. With his own son Guðrøðr blinded and castrated in 1223, and his grandchildren very young, it seems likely that Rögnvaldr was preparing to pass his throne to Alan's son – or, since the groom was probably less than ten years old, to place effective rule of Man in Alan's hands. Alan now had a personal interest in ensuring that Rögnvaldr was able to transmit this heritage and had become as directly concerned in the success of his ally as Ferchar was for Óláfr. Alexander may have been unconcerned as to which of the rivals for the Manx kingship triumphed in the end, for both men were now so firmly tied into Scottish alliances that the success of either still meant that Scottish interests prevailed. What Alexander might not have calculated on was the response of the Manx, who were infuriated by Rögnvaldr's deception. Before the end of the year they had declared him deposed and offered the kingship over them to Óláfr. If Alan wished to secure a throne for his son, he would have to fight for it.[326]

No evidence survives for how Alexander viewed the unfolding situation in Man or the involvement of his constable in it, but it is highly unlikely that he was unaware of Rögnvaldr's growing dependence on Alan. On 31 March 1226, shortly after the Manxmen had offered the kingship to Óláfr, Alan was present at a gathering of Scotland's political leadership at Stirling, and it is probable that the turmoil in the kingdom of the Isles was on the agenda.[327] Whatever arguments were presented at that gathering, Alan apparently prevailed in persuading Alexander that Rögnvaldr was the man to back. There is no surviving record of immediate action to reinstate the exiled Rögnvaldr, but an undated letter from Óláfr to Henry III, giving his account of the conflict with his brother and requesting that Henry send letters to Alexander and Alan requiring them to desist from attacks on him and his merchants, probably belongs to this period.[328] Its implications of violent attacks on Óláfr's interests points to a

maintenance of pressure on Man from Galloway. The letter, however, also makes passing reference to envoys having been sent to Henry by Rögnvaldr, and it seems that a negotiated solution to the conflict was still being sought by both parties. In April 1228, Óláfr received a safe-conduct from Henry to last from 29 September to 13 October, to come to England to arrange a peace between him and his brother.[329] Perhaps in the belief that the safe-conduct signalled Rögnvaldr's readiness to negotiate and agreement to a truce, Óláfr and the leading men of Man 'sailed over to the islands'.[330] In their absence, Rögnvaldr returned to Man with Alan of Galloway, Thomas earl of Atholl and a great host of ships and men, and wasted the southern part of the island. Alan and his associates then withdrew to Galloway, leaving behind 'bailiffs' to organise tribute-gathering. This raid seems ill-conceived as a means of persuading the Manx to restore Rögnvaldr to the kingship or to reconcile them to the possibility of the kingship passing to the son of the lord of Galloway, and it is unlikely that Alan was so naïve as to believe that he had conquered the island in a single operation. Thomas earl of Atholl's presence in his brother's campaign might indicate that Alexander was fully aware of the venture, and it is possible that the attack on Man was intended to bring Óláfr into negotiations without English involvement. The establishment of Scottish clientage over the kingdom of Man and the Isles and both of its rivals for the kingship, replacing the English domination which had prevailed since the time of Henry II, would have strengthened hugely Alexander's authority in western mainland Scotland. Alan and Thomas, for their parts, might have felt that such an outcome might redress the injustice done to them by Henry's government in Ireland for its failure to protect their interests there from Hugh de Lacy, who had been restored to his earldom of Ulster.[331] If such were the calculations, then the plan collapsed when Óláfr returned to Man, drove out Alan's men and resumed sole kingship of the island.[332]

The events of summer 1228 in Man had a brief coda in the winter of 1228–9. With five ships, Rögnvaldr returned to Man in a night-time raid and surprised his half-brother at Peel, burning his galleys. Instead of attacking Óláfr, however, he based himself for six weeks at Ronaldsway and began to drum up support amongst the men of the southern part of the island in an attempt to win enough backing to force a division of the kingdom. Óláfr in the interim gathered his support in the northern part of Man, and early in February brought his men to Tynwald. There, on 14 February 1229, the rivals clashed one last time and Rögnvaldr and his men were routed, the king being cut

down in the flight and killed.[333] We do not know why Rögnvaldr launched this solo venture: perhaps he believed that without the complicating presence of Alan he might salvage something from the wreckage of his ambitions; perhaps, too, he feared that Alan and the Scottish king had lost interest in supporting him after the failure of the summer campaign.

Alexander and Alan's attention was indeed diverted from Manx affairs in the latter half of 1228. The cause of their diversion was the eruption of renewed disturbances in the north-west of the kingdom, which were led, according to *Gesta Annalia*, by a certain Gillescop or Gilleasbuig, who was apparently a member of the MacWilliam kin.[334] In a much more detailed account of events than that offered by *Gesta Annalia*, Walter Bower's thirteenth-century source, Gillescop attacked and killed one of Alan of Galloway's Lauderdale vassals, Thomas of Thirlestane, in his castle at Abertarff which stood on the site later occupied by Fort Augustus at the south end of Loch Ness.[335] The insurrection spread swiftly, and early in September Gillescop and his men burned a large part of Inverness. Alexander, it is reported, hurried to Inverness with a small force, before leaving command of the suppression of the rising to William Comyn, earl of Buchan, his justiciar of Scotia, and heading south. Gillescop, it is subsequently reported, was eventually killed later in 1229 along with his two sons, and their heads brought to the king.[336] The chronology of these events is tight but not impossibly so. Alexander was at Elgin on 30 June 1228, and then attended by Earl William was at Stirling on 22 October 1228; by 10 March 1229 the earl was back in the south attending a meeting of the royal court at Edinburgh.[337] Earl William, however, disappears from circulation thereafter until February 1230, when he witnessed a royal charter at Scone;[338] this absence could reflect his commitment to the suppression of the northern rising. Although played down by the chronicle sources, the personal involvement of both Alexander and his justiciar of Scotia points to the insurrection as being an altogether more serious threat to the security of the northern districts of the kingdom than its brief treatment in contemporary accounts might suggest. It is likely that this action was one factor which diverted the king's and Alan of Galloway's attention from affairs in Man.

Was the northern insurrection that may have rumbled on from as early as 1223, but more certainly becoming a major crisis in 1228, a direct consequence of Alexander's campaigns in Argyll against

Ruaidhri mac Raonaill in 1221–2? *Gesta Annalia*'s account of the 1228 rising names the 'unrighteous men of the race of MacWilliam' as 'Gillespic, and his sons, and Rodoric'. A straightforward reading of this wording is that Rodoric was one of the race of MacWilliam, i.e., he was not Ruaidhri mac Raonaill. Lanercost is less clear-cut: the rising was led by 'certain wicked men of the race of MacWilliam; and his son; and one Rodoric', but in its account of the aftermath of the rising it refers to MacWilliam in the singular.[339] This rendering seems to imply that this Rodoric was not a MacWilliam. Bower simply referred to 'a certain Scot called Gillescop' active in 1228, but in his earlier annal for 1223 he had copied the *Gesta Annalia* text verbatim.[340] None of the sources state explicitly that Rodoric perished along with the MacWilliams in the suppression of the rising, but equally there is no subsequent explicit mention of him in any surviving source. Indeed, it has to be conceded in all this elaborate hypothesising that there is no surviving direct reference to Ruaidhri after his undated charter in favour of the monks of Paisley, in which he was designated lord of Kintyre. On the basis of modern identification of Ruaidhri mac Raonaill as being the un-named member of the Mhic Somhairle kin mentioned in the annals as falling in battle at Ballyshannon in 1247, then 'Rodoric' survived the bloody conclusion to the whole MacWilliam adventure, finally to perish fighting as a mercenary in Ireland.[341] If that identification is correct, then Ruaidhri escaped Alexander's suppression of the MacWilliam challenge and Buchan's mopping-up operations, but played no identifiable part in the general warfare that was about to erupt in the Isles, and ceased thereafter to hold any significant role in the power structures of the region.

Although the early weeks of 1229 had seen the removal of two factors which had for so long disturbed the peace of Alexander's kingdom and the island region to its west, the deaths of Rögnvaldr in Man and Gilleasbuig and his sons in the Highlands did not bring tranquillity in their wake. Norwegian sources report 'great dispeace' in the Hebrides in 1229, and identify Alan of Galloway and four sons of Dubhghall son of Sumarliði, Dubhghall Screech, Donnchad, Uspak and Sumarliði, as the chief disturbers of the peace.[342] Alan may have lost his ally, but he still aimed to secure the Manx kingship for his young son and, it appears, had retained Alexander's support for that plan. The king was perhaps happy for his constable to continue pursuing his Hebridean ambitions, and possibly supported his efforts to secure a positive outcome; it is unlikely that Alexander did not sanction Alan's marriage in 1229 to Rose, daughter of Hugh de Lacy.[343] That marriage

ended the conflict between Hugh and the Galloway brothers over land in eastern Ulster, which Hugh had resumed into his own hands following his restoration to the earldom. Although Hugh's relationship with the English crown remained somewhat ambivalent, the sealing of peace between the earl of Ulster and the lord of Galloway cannot have been regarded as anything but positive by their respective kings. For Henry III, it eased the immense burden on the English administration in Ireland which Hugh and his Irish allies had represented, while for Alexander it may have seen Hugh use his influence with the Uí Néill to end their meddling in Hebridean affairs and to cut any support for the MacWilliams.[344] Certainly, the winter of 1229–30 seems to have seen the final elimination of the MacWilliam challenge to Alexander's position, perhaps aided by the closing off of access to external aid to the king's rivals. According to the Lanercost chronicler, at some point in early 1230 the last representative of the MacWilliam line, an unnamed infant daughter of Gilleasbuig, was brutally killed at Forfar by formal decree, her head being smashed against the shaft of the market cross there.[345] Alexander was at Forfar on 11 January 1230,[346] and it is tempting to see his presence as the occasion on which he instructed this ruthless elimination of the last threat to his kingship from the senior and alternative segment of the royal kin. This act, as shocking at the time as it is to modern eyes, symbolised Alexander's unflinching determination and readiness to sanction any necessary action to end all challenges to his authority and to his position. The violent end of this young child, guilty only for the blood-claim which she carried, may have been intended by Alexander to serve as a salutary warning to others of the fate that awaited all those who opposed him. His earlier treatment of the men involved in the murder of Bishop Adam at Halkirk, coupled with this calculated act of judicial murder, constituted powerful public displays of royal retribution meted out on all those who disturbed the king's peace.

This bloody conclusion at Forfar to three generations of MacWilliam challenge provided Alexander with only around three months of comparative peace before a new threat erupted along the western margins of his kingdom. Alexander's response to this threat set in motion a chain of events which, within a few years, had led to a radical redefinition of the political structures of the whole western seaboard of his kingdom from Galloway to Ross, and the establishment of his position as unquestioned lord of the whole of mainland Scotland. Discussion of Alexander's part in the unfolding events in Man and the Hebrides after 1228 has recently tended

towards a view that this outcome was, if not quite accidental, then certainly something of a bonus delivered by a series of inter-related political calculations. In contrast with the clearly proactive personal role which he played in the Clyde estuary campaigns of 1221–2, Caithness in 1222, and against the MacWilliams until 1229, it has been suggested that Alexander played a somewhat passive role in the conflict in the western seas after 1223 and permitted his policy in this region to be led by Alan of Galloway. Alan, it is argued, had persuaded Alexander that he could deliver indirect control of the region to the Scottish crown and that the interests of Galloway and the king of Scots coincided. The failure of Alan's policy following Rögnvaldr's death and the threat of a general Scoto-Norwegian war which his increasingly violent and desperate efforts to secure the Manx kingship for his illegitimate son supposedly provoked, it has been claimed, broke this relationship founded on mutual interest between Alexander and his constable and led to a dramatic shift in Scottish royal policy towards both the Isles and Galloway.[347] The principal strand in this argument is that Scottish policy in the west after 1228 was both shaped and driven by Alan of Galloway while Alexander watched from the sidelines. From 1221, however, Alexander had been involved actively in the extension of his authority in the region and had, if arguments concerning the re-emergence of Mhic Dubhghaill and Mhic Domhnaill power in the following decade are accepted, selected his own men from amongst the Mhic Somhairle kindred to advance his interests in the Isles. Alan of Galloway may still have been providing the lead in policy-framing and the actual conduct of war, but Alexander was selecting his own candidates to deliver control of the western seaboard and adjacent islands to the Scottish crown. Alexander, not the lord of Galloway, had provided the ambitious chieftains of the Mhic Dubhghaill kindred with legitimacy as his agents to extend their power into territory over which Óláfr Guðrøðarsson ruled. It was these men, headed by Donnchad mac Dubhghaill, who triggered the gravest crisis to threaten Scottish interests in the West since the death of Sumarliði in 1164, not Alan.

As with the Guðrøðarssons, the Mhic Dubhghaill were a far from united family and were riven by rivalries which drove them to pursue radically divergent strategies in their efforts to win kingship in the Isles. From as early as 1209–10, at least one member of the family, Uspak, had been pursuing a career in the service of the Norwegian king and had been used by him in the first significant flexing of Norwegian muscles in the Hebrides since 1103.[348] When Óláfr arrived

in Bergen in early 1230 to make his formal submission as king of Man and the Isles to King Hákon IV Hákonarson, and to seek his aid to secure that position against challenges from Alan of Galloway and Alexander's allies the Mhic Dubhghaill, he found that Hákon had been making his own arrangements for the Hebridean kingship; Uspak Mac Dubhghaill had secured Hákon's backing and been awarded the kingship.[349] What was worse, he also found that his nephew Guðrøðr Rögnvaldarson, who had been mutilated in Skye in 1223 by Pál Balkisson and subsequently passed over by his father for the succession in place of his sister and her young husband Thomas son of Alan of Galloway, was also in Bergen and was apparently allied with Uspak in King Hákon's service – as was, somewhat ironically, his mutilator Pál and his son. Óláfr quickly submitted to King Hákon and, whilst he was unable to secure acceptance of his kingship in Man and the Isles from his Norwegian overlord, he was able to win a place for himself in the naval expedition being prepared in Norway to install Uspak as king. All of Alexander's strategies for control in the west through either of the lineages descended from Guðrøðr II, or through the Mhic Dubhghaill, were on the point of unravelling.

The composition of the leadership of the expedition which sailed west from Bergen in spring 1230, coupled with Hákon IV's ambitions to assert his own regal authority over territories that were believed to fall by right under his kingship, suggests that a Norwegian fleet would have descended on the Hebrides regardless of who was directing Scottish policy there. The campaign, furthermore, addressed internal Norwegian political needs as much as Hákon's own plans for the external projection of his lordship and was clearly designed to hit several targets simultaneously. Fear of Scottish – and English – domination, frustrated personal ambitions, and intra-familial jealousies seethed within the odd assortment of Islesmen who had been forced together by Hákon's decision to award the kingship to his own candidate; they would cooperate so long as Norwegian warriors were at their disposal, but all had conflicting objectives towards which they intended to direct those same warriors.

Surviving Scottish sources are almost universally silent on the events of 1230–1, but outline accounts of the campaign recorded in the Lanercost Chronicle and other English sources indicate that it was regarded as a major incursion which had a direct impact on Alexander's kingdom.[350] Alexander may have received intelligence of the expedition soon after it reached Orkney. If word did not travel

south from there, it would soon have reached him from Earl Ferchar when Pál Balkisson's son and other Hebrideans came south with elements of the fleet to attack their own family rivals in Skye.[351] Further alarming news may have come to him from Donnchad MacDubhghaill, who with his brother Dubhghall had been captured by the Norwegians during negotiations in the Sound of Islay. Uspak had arranged for Donnchad's escape while Dubhghall was taken under his protection, an arrangement which perhaps hints at an effort to accommodate the dual allegiance of the Mhic Dubhghaill to the crowns of Scotland and Norway without compromising their status as landholders in both mainland Scotland and the Isles. There is no indication from the Norwegian and Manx accounts that Donnchad played any subsequent significant role in the conflict. There are other significant absentees from the list of Mhic Somhairle who either participated in the Norwegian-backed campaign or were neutralised by it. Ruaidhri mac Raonaill is perhaps the most remarkable of these absentees, particularly if he had so recently been involved in military actions against Alexander, and given that his own nephew, Guðrøðr Rögnvaldarson, was so prominent in the expeditionary force's leadership. His absence might lend support to the suggestion that he had fallen in the suppression of the MacWilliam rising in 1229. It is, perhaps, less surprising that Ruaidhri's brother Domhnall is nowhere mentioned explicitly, given his supposed benefit from Alexander's patronage in 1221–2, when he may have been given the lordship of Kintyre that Ruaidhri had previously held.[352] The Norwegian muster in Islay Sound and the fleet's subsequent raids around Kintyre may have been designed to overawe him, but the stubborn resistance the attackers encountered is perhaps the clearest indication of where Domhnall considered his best interests to lie.

This gathering storm on the Atlantic coast demanded Alexander's personal attention, and by late May he was at Ayr, the principal royal base on the outer Firth of Clyde. There he met and took counsel with Alan of Galloway and other leading councillors and magnates, including Walter son of Alan, the Steward, whose territories around the Clyde estuary were highly vulnerable to Norwegian attack.[353] Perhaps even as they deliberated what action to pursue, Uspak led his fleet round the south end of Kintyre and into the firth towards Bute, the most important of the islands controlled by the Steward but over which the Norwegians claimed lordship. There they attacked and took Rothesay Castle after a highly destructive siege in which Walter son of Alan's steward was killed and one of his vassal knights captured.[354]

This assault on the property of one of the greatest Scottish lords was evidently the catalyst for direct action against the Norwegian fleet, and Alan moved to intercept them with his own ships. News of their approach forced Uspak to withdraw round Kintyre and into the Hebrides, where he shortly afterwards died, apparently from injuries received in the attack on Rothesay.[355] This withdrawal of the attackers from the Firth of Clyde may have been regarded by Alexander as marking the end of the immediate emergency, for on 7 August he was at Machan in the Clyde valley,[356] apparently on route east. The continuing threat to Scottish interests posed by the fleet, however, was soon made evident when Óláfr Guðrøðarson took command of the force and, eluding Alan and his ships, sailed for Man.[357] There, overcoming what appears to have been fairly limited opposition, Óláfr resumed his kingship but was forced to make a partition of his realm with his nephew Guðrøðr; in a reversal of the arrangement made between Óláfr and Rögnvaldr, Óláfr retained Man whilst Guðrøðr received Lewis and the northern islands of the kingdom. This settlement overturned everything that Alexander and his two leading west coast magnates had been striving; Alan had failed to prevent his rival from regaining control of Man, whilst Ferchar MacTaggart had seen Lewis placed in the hands of the man in whose mutilation seven years earlier he had been complicit. Both halves of the kingdom of the Isles were in the hands of men who had submitted to Hákon IV of Norway, and Alexander's own protégés, the Mhic Dubhghaill and Mhic Domhnaill, had been at best powerless to prevent it and at worst had connived to bring about that situation.

By the time the onset of winter brought an end to naval campaigning in the western seas, Alexander would have been aware of the failure of Alan's efforts to prevent Óláfr from regaining control of Man. This knowledge may have been the deciding factor in bringing about a change of policy direction towards the kingdom of Man and the Isles. At Christmas 1230, Alexander held court at Elgin in Moray.[358] His visit to Elgin was connected, not as so often suggested with the final denouement of the MacWilliam challenge,[359] but probably more with Alexander's preparations for the formal founding of a priory of Valliscaulian monks at Pluscarden,[360] perhaps as a thanks-offering for the long-desired elimination of the MacWilliam threat. His Christmas court was also an occasion for the gathering of his chief councillors, and the leading magnates of the north would also have been in attendance, amongst them probably Earl Ferchar; major political decisions seem to have been taken amidst the Yuletide

festivities. Ferchar may have used this occasion to urge Alexander to accept that Óláfr, his son-in-law, had secured the kingship of Man, and to remind him that it was not simply through Galloway that Scottish influence in the Hebrides could be advanced. With the king, too, was Walter son of Alan, the Steward, whose territories in the Clyde islands had borne the brunt of the Norwegian-backed campaign and whose expensive new castle at Rothesay had been captured, plundered and burned. As has been argued persuasively, he had perhaps most reason to persuade the king to change his policies towards the political settlement of the west.[361] Walter accompanied Alexander on the southward journey from Moray, and on 9 January 1231 was with him at Kincardine at the southern end of the Cairnamount route.[362] According to the thirteenth-century St Andrews source incorporated within Walter Bower's *Scotichronicon*, Alexander and Walter were at St Andrews shortly before the Feast of the Purification (2 February) and there the king appointed him justiciar of Scotia to replace the ageing William Comyn, earl of Buchan.[363] Confirmation of this appointment appears on 3 February when, identified as justiciar, Walter was with Alexander at Clackmannan.[364] Thus a man whose traditional family interests had suffered greatly as a consequence of the policies which Alexander, with Alan of Galloway's active encouragement, had pursued in the west since the start of his reign, now held the most powerful secular office in the realm beneath the king. From the early 1230s until the end of the reign, Alexander's policy towards the western mainland and island territories was led by Walter son of Alan and his Stewart kinsmen, ably assisted by their ally Máeldomhnaigh, the earl of Lennox, who together extended their influence through Cowal and into Knapdale in mainland Argyll, and into all of the Clyde islands. In this process they appear to have been aligned closely with Donnchad mac Dubhghaill, lord of Argyll and, probably, Domhnall mac Raonaill. Although his actions in 1230 amounted to a masterful attempt to avoid taking up arms against either of his overlords, Donnchad's foundation in 1231 of Ardchattan Priory on the north shore of Loch Etive, colonised by the same order of Valliscaulian monks that Alexander had established at Pluscarden in Moray that same year, points towards a clearer alignment with the Scottish king than his earlier ambivalent behaviour might suggest.[365] There seems, indeed, to have been a conscious effort on the part of this newly dominant political grouping to stress their closer alignment with Alexander's interests and greater willingness to shape their ambitions to suit the king's needs than had ever been the case with the lord of

Galloway. Later Stewart family tradition apparently went so far as to suggest that Alan's loyalty to the king and kingdom had been questionable, possibly representing an attempt to accuse Alan of mis-advising the king and using his role as constable to direct royal military resources towards his own ends.[366] Perhaps with an added shadow of royal disfavour falling over Alan and his associates, the curtain was finally coming down on the generation of magnates who had dominated the last years of King William's reign and the early part of Alexander's.

Spring 1231 did not see a resumption of large-scale Scottish operations against Óláfr and his allies. Alan of Galloway may have itched to carry the war once more against Man, but there is no evidence that his galleys took to the waters in hostile operations; Alexander, perhaps encouraged by Walter son of Alan, had drawn a line under the whole affair. Certainly, there is no evidence that Alexander felt any need to base himself close to the Clyde coast as he had done in the previous summer, the scant records for his whereabouts in the spring and summer of 1231 locating him consistently in the south-east of his kingdom.[367] The threat had not entirely dissipated, however, for as the Norwegians sailed north on their homeward voyage they again raided in Kintyre and, according to the saga evidence for their attack, engaged in some heavy fighting.[368] From Kintyre, the Norwegian force sailed to Lewis, where they installed Guðrøðr Rögnvaldarson as king before heading for Norway. Guðrøðr had supposedly been blinded and castrated by his father's enemies in 1223, but there is nothing to suggest that he was a mere figurehead set in place until his own young son came of age. Indeed, he appears to have moved swiftly to assert his authority and to avenge himself on the man who had ordered his mutilation. Freed from the restraining presence of the Norwegian expeditionary force which had forced them to cooperate, old enmities quickly resurfaced and Pál Balkisson was slain in an attack by Guðrøðr and his men. Guðrøðr, too, quickly met his end, being slain in Lewis by un-named enemies.[369] Given that Óláfr thereafter took control of his nephew's portion of the kingdom and retained it until his death in 1237, it is possible that he had also simply been waiting for the departure of the Norwegians to settle old scores. By the early summer of 1231, therefore, the whole of the kingdom of Man and the Isles was securely in the hands of Óláfr, the son-in-law of Earl Ferchar, and stability had been restored at last along the western seaboard of Alexander's kingdom.

There were two codas to Alexander's decade-long effort to tighten the grip of the Scottish crown on the areas of mainland Scotland that lay most distant from the traditional centres of royal power. The first occurred in autumn 1231 when Jón, earl of Caithness and Orkney, was murdered by his rivals at Thurso in Caithness.[370] The Chronicle of Melrose account of the affair saw his slaughter and burning in his lodgings as a fitting display of Divine retribution for his part in the slaying of Bishop Adam nine years earlier.[371] For Alexander, it was perhaps even more welcome, for despite the settlement which he had made with the earl in the aftermath of the crisis of 1222, Jón had shown greater readiness to recognise his debts to his Norwegian overlord for Orkney than to his Scottish overlord for Caithness. When King Hákon's fleet had arrived in Orkney in 1230, Jón had added twenty of his own galleys to swell the force as it sailed to the Hebrides.[372] The earl does not appear to have taken any further part in the campaign, thereby perhaps avoiding the possibility of bearing arms in person against one of his overlords, but Alexander is unlikely to have been impressed by the fine distinction being displayed: Jón had again shown his unreliability in a time of crisis. His death gave Alexander the perfect opportunity to rein in the northern earldom without the need to resort to military means. Enforcing strict application of the rules of primogeniture and inheritance under 'feudal' principles, the earldom passed through a female line to the family of the earls of Angus.[373] The new comital lineage in Caithness and Orkney may quickly have acquired some Scandinavian camouflage but they were, in essence, Scots and more inclined towards their Scottish than their Norwegian overlord. The conflict that had lasted for two centuries between Scots and Scandinavians for domination of the northern mainland was over.

The second episode was more dramatic yet. Around 2 February 1234, Alan of Galloway died without a legitimate direct male heir.[374] His death presented Alexander with an opportunity to break up the last great principality which existed within the limits of mainland Scotland and to bind this notoriously fractious territory more firmly into the kingdom. The attempt that Alan had made to secure the kingship of Man for his bastard son, Thomas, suggests that it was accepted generally that the semi-independent lordship of Galloway, and the various lordships and properties in Scotland and England which Alan had acquired through his maternal heritage and through marriage, were not to descend through an illegitimate line. As his only legitimate son had long predeceased him, and had still been a child

when he had died,[375] Alan's only direct heirs were his three daughters: Helen, child of his first marriage; and Christiana and Dervorguilla, his children by his marriage to Margaret, daughter of earl David of Huntingdon. By 1233, all three were married to important members of the Anglo-Scottish nobility: Helen to Roger de Quincy, earl of Winchester; Christiana to William de Forz, heir to the earldom of Aumale; and Dervorguilla to John Balliol, lord of Barnard Castle.[376] Roger was an old associate of Alexander's in the war of 1215–17, while Christiana and Dervorguilla were nieces of John, earl of Huntingdon, and cousins of the king. Although partitioning of the Galloway inheritance, especially of Galloway proper, was unpopular with the men of the province, Alexander was unlikely to stand by and permit such close councillors and kin to be excluded from their just heritage in favour of some collateral male heir. Such an heir existed in the son of Alan's younger brother Thomas, earl of Atholl.[377] The earl had died in 1231, leaving an illegitimate son, Alan, and an under-age legitimate son, Patrick.[378] This boy Patrick – or, indeed, one of Alan's other more distant male cousins – appears to have been the preferred candidate for inheritance of the lordship of Galloway proper amongst the leaders of native society there, but Alexander was not prepared to see the creation of a still greater territorial power bloc within his kingdom, which the joining of the earldom of Atholl and the lordship of Galloway in a single pair of hands would have represented. Claims that the men of Galloway even went so far as to suggest that Alexander should take the lordship into his own hands, rather than divide it between women, reads very much like a gloss designed to emphasise the king's scrupulous adherence to legality,[379] but legal high-mindedness was probably less of a consideration in the settlement that he imposed than political opportunism. Alexander's determination to break up the Galloway inheritance and complete its absorption into his kingdom, however, precipitated a graver crisis.

The political manoeuvring over the Galloway inheritance appears to have lasted through the summer. Once it emerged that Alexander was set on forcing a break-up of Alan's sprawling domain, the anxiety of the leading native chieftains in the lordship proper erupted into open hostility and a declaration in favour of the illegitimate Thomas over his legitimate half-sisters.[380] Before the end of the year open conflict had broken out, perhaps stirred up further by Hugh de Lacy from Ulster, whom Matthew Paris certainly saw as an eminence grise behind the affair, with raids by Galwegians onto neighbouring (unspecified) Scottish territories.[381] Alexander, who was probably

more concerned about arrangements for the forthcoming marriage of his sister, the younger Margaret, to Gilbert Marshal, earl of Pembroke and lord of Leinster, did not become involved immediately in efforts to end this challenge to his authority. Between April and the middle of June he was mainly in the south-east of his kingdom,[382] but around the start of July he led an army into Galloway. This was clearly a major operation, for amongst the military leadership of the force were Walter son of Alan, justiciar of Scotia; Walter Olifard, justiciar of Lothian; Walter Comyn, earl of Menteith; Malcolm, earl of Angus and Caithness; Walter Bisset; and Alan Durward. Although the Melrose chronicler records a date of 15 July for the start of the invasion of Galloway, a charter dated 7 July and witnessed by the above-named men was granted by Alexander at 'Kenmore'.[383] Accounts of what followed suggest that 'Kenmore' might be Kenmure at the north end of Loch Ken in Galloway, for Melrose describes Alexander as having encamped with his army in marshy water-meadows, such as those which still exist in the haugh land along the River Ken. Seeing Alexander's men becoming literally bogged down, the Galwegians who had been shadowing his advance through the hilly country flanking the valley launched an attack on his disordered army. Potential disaster was averted when Earl Ferchar and the men of Ross arrived at the battlefield and took the Galwegians in the rear, routing them and driving them off into the hills. The following day the native leadership submitted to Alexander, who accepted them into his peace, but Thomas son of Alan and his leading native supporter, a certain 'Gilrod', were not prepared to sue for clemency and fled to Ireland. It seemed to be a quick, easy and total victory for Alexander, who left Walter Comyn in charge of mopping up operations whilst he headed east for his sister Margery's wedding at Berwick.[384] Although the completeness of his victory proved quickly to be illusory, as he presided over his sister's marriage Alexander must have felt more securely in control of mainland Scotland than had been any of his forefathers. His writ now seemed to run unchallenged from the Mull of Galloway to Dunnet Head in Caithness, and he was more surely the master of his own house, free from all domestic rivals, than any king of Scots before him.

The fifteen years between the settlement of the peace with Henry III in 1220 and the crushing of the Galloway revolt in 1235 witnessed one of the most rapid advances in royal power in Scottish history. There is no doubt that Alexander was a beneficiary of the unrelenting efforts of his father in the last decades of his life to expand the

effective reach of royal authority into every corner of mainland Scotland, and of the gradual enmeshing of the native magnates all along the margins of the sphere of Scottish influence into closer bonds of dependence through marriage ties, honours, bribery and fear, but his success was also of his own making. Throughout this period, as in the war of 1215–17, Alexander provided active and effective leadership. It was he who commanded the forces directed against Ruairidh mac Raonaill in 1221–2, who led the response to the murder of Bishop Adam in 1222, commanded the response to the Norwegian onslaught in 1230, and who oversaw the defeat of the Galwegian rising in 1235. Rather than being an almost passive observer in the warfare which delivered him control of the western mainland and a position of dominance over the Isles, Alexander was the framer of Scottish policy. It was his decisions which triggered general war in the west, created the conditions for MacWilliam risings to prosper, and which drew Norway into the conflict in Man and the Isles, but it was his leadership which delivered positive outcomes to each of these challenges and threats. Likewise, it was Alexander who ended nearly a century of challenge to his lineage's position by his ruthless instruction to kill the last MacWilliam heiress. Hard fighting and harsh choices, however, delivered Alexander more effective domination of mainland Scotland than any of his ancestors had enjoyed. In achieving that domination, he was fortunate to have able and loyal commanders at his disposal – Alan and Thomas of Galloway; Ferchar MacTaggart; William Comyn, earl of Buchan; or Patrick, earl of Dunbar – and an ability to identify the men in whom to place his trust. The war in England had been the proving ground in which he had learned these skills; the wars in Scotland were the theatre in which he demonstrated how well he had learned his lessons.

FIVE

The Best of Friends and Neighbours?

In analysis of Alexander II's relationship with England and its government, the period 1221–1238 has come to be viewed as a long phase of relative tranquillity bracketed by two defining episodes in Anglo-Scottish affairs: the treaty of 1220 and the marriage of Alexander to Princess Joan in the following year; and the 1237 Treaty of York and Joan's death in March 1238. To English historians of the reign of Henry III, the Scottish king and his interventions in English affairs recede from view once Pandulf and Hubert had secured their advantageous renegotiation of the 1209 Norham agreement. Alexander and his family effectively disappear from discussions of the restoration of royal government in England, other than as passive bystanders carried along by events over which they had no control.

In fairness, it must be recognised that most Scottish historians have paid equally scant attention to Alexander's continuing personal involvement in business dealings and diplomacy with the English crown, or to the significance of the marriages arranged for his three sisters in terms of securing close bonds between key members of the English and Anglo-Irish nobility. Instead, it is the long campaigns waged by Alexander to secure his domination of mainland Scotland in this same period that have attracted scholarly interest. Yet, as close examination of English royal records reveals, the marriage ceremony in June 1221 marked only the first phase in a prolonged episode of expansion of Alexander's personal interests within the southern kingdom. Not only did he play an active role in securing the promised marriages within England for his two elder sisters, Margaret and Isabella, but he also pursued a prestigious marriage for his younger sister, Margery.[385] Alongside this marriage diplomacy, he also reconstructed the financial interests of the Scottish crown in England, particularly through securing possession of a series of wardships of major magnatial inheritances, one of which he used directly to the advantage of his second sister, Isabella. These dealings were aided by Alexander's close personal relationships with both Henry III and Hubert de Burgh, but even such strong bonds did not ensure entirely untroubled dealings between the two kingdoms. After Hubert's fall from power in 1232, and signs of a growing distance in Alexander's relationship with Henry's sister from around the same time, new

tensions arose as Alexander chose to re-voice old claims. This chapter will examine the efforts made to convert the 1220 treaty into the basis for a sound working relationship between the two kingdoms; the importance of marriage bonds and money-making arrangements in further securing that new status quo; and the near-unravelling of the settlement which the fall of Hubert, failure of the marriage negotiations for Margery, and the death of Queen Joan threatened.

The potential bonds of friendship between the kingdoms which the marriage of the Scottish king to the sister of the English king promised to deliver were further strengthened in 1221 when Alexander assented to the marriage of his elder sister, Margaret, to Hubert de Burgh, justiciar of England and the head of Henry's government since the ending of Pandulf's legation that July.[386] There may have been murmurings amongst the English political leadership at the audacity of the move, which catapulted the younger son of a minor nobleman into the topmost echelons of elite society, but no-one at the time dared speak openly against the man who ruled England in the young king's name. Amongst the charges eventually brought against Hubert on his fall from power in 1232 was that he had been entrusted with Margaret's keeping by King John, had raped or seduced her, and hoped through her to acquire the kingship of the Scots should her brother die.[387] The charge was false, intended to blacken Hubert's already tarnished reputation and present him as a wicked, untrustworthy and overweeningly ambitious schemer who had plotted his rise to power over many decades, but it reveals also one of the aspects of his rise which was most resented by his political enemies in England: that he had used his position to win a royal bride. The significance of this marriage has usually been discussed in terms of its advantage to Hubert, for whom it brought unparalleled social elevation, marital bonds with the kings of England and Scotland, and a strengthening of his already great influence in the government of England,[388] but it must also have been recognised by Alexander that such a close alliance with the lynchpin in English royal government might yield future dividends. In the final working-through of the landed component of the Anglo-Scottish treaty agreed in June 1220, the support of the true power behind the English throne was surely seen as a guarantee that a generous settlement would be reached. It did not, however, immediately bring Hubert any significant increase in his landed wealth or resources, for Margaret brought little if anything by way of a dowry, and there is no indication that Alexander was moved to provide his sister with an additional *maritagium* beyond

the money which their father had given King John under the terms of the Norham accord.[389] Walter Bower, probably drawing on a now lost thirteenth-century St Andrews account, states that Alexander imposed an aid of 10,000 merks on his kingdom for the marriages of his sisters,[390] but as this taxation was levied only in 1224 it is unlikely to have been in respect of Margaret's marriage to Hubert, which had occurred three years earlier, but may have been connected to the negotiations surrounding his second sister, Isabella. As discussed below, that match involved extensive negotiations over the rights to the wardship and marriage of Isabella's prospective husband, which were resolved through a complex set of financial settlements with other interested parties. For Alexander, an aid raised notionally in respect of his sisters' marriages may have provided a cash reserve which permitted him to extend his political network in England.

While a dowry in land or cash does not appear to have been forthcoming in respect of Margaret, as brother-in-law of a king, who was himself brother-in-law of his own king, Hubert could expect future benefits to flow to him. Having recognised the potential for personal advancement that marriage to Margaret offered him, the mere younger son of a minor knight, he appears to have worked assiduously to arrange it. A letter of around 1220 sent to Hubert by Robert de Courtenay, Hubert's envoy to Alexander, could relate to either Alexander's marriage or Margaret's, but its reference to the Scottish king's extremely positive reaction to the gift of a palfrey from Hubert, and Courtney's comment that he understood the potential value to Hubert of the relationship with Alexander, perhaps points more strongly at the latter.[391] Hubert may have started serious negotiations as early as the meetings with Alexander which settled the king's wedding to Princess Joan, and probably reached final agreement on its terms at the time of Alexander and Joan's marriage at York. Hubert and Margaret's own wedding was celebrated in some splendour at London on 3 October, just within the agreed period in which the marriage of the two Scottish princesses was to be settled, presided over by the archbishop of Canterbury and with Henry in attendance and standing in Alexander's place as chief male kinsman of the bride.[392] The relationship between the two kingdoms which had so recently been soured by hostility and suspicion seemed to be well on the road to a return to stability and mutual respect.

Having secured the marriage of the eldest of Alexander's sisters to the English crown's most powerful servant, a further step had been

taken in meeting Henry's obligations under the 1220 treaty. A second marriage under the treaty's terms had still to be arranged, however, and there may have been quiet hopes that it would yield equally important results. Alexander's second sister, Isabella, had remained in England after the 1220 deal and her brother's subsequent marriage at York; as with Margaret, Henry III's government was obliged to find her a suitable husband in England by 9 October 1221 or to return her to Alexander. For much of the time since 1209, when she had been handed into the custody of King John, Isabella had been in the keeping of Peter de Maulay at Corfe Castle in Dorset, a royal fortress that was both luxurious palace and state prison.[393] There she was in the company of Eleanor of Brittany, sister of King John's mysteriously vanished nephew and rival, Arthur. After de Maulay's dismissal as castellan in June 1221, Isabella appears to have continued to reside at Corfe, where King Henry ordered gifts of clothing, fine bedding and other cloth to be sent to her, but it seems that, after her sister's marriage to Hubert de Burgh, she may have joined their household.[394] She was in no sense a hostage, and in November 1222 arrangements were made for her to make a visit to Scotland, but according to the Chronicle of Melrose it was late in 1223 before she returned permanently to her brother's court, honouring the agreement to permit her to return freely, should no husband be found for her by October 1221.[395] In the interim, Henry continued to make rich gifts to her, but there is no indication that he or his government had been coming any closer to finding her the promised match worthy of her station.[396]

With such pressing issues relating directly to the fulfilment of the 1220 treaty dragging on unresolved, Alexander was obliged to involve himself personally in negotiations and visit his brother-in-law's kingdom. The first opportunity since his marriage to Joan occurred in summer 1223, when he completed the pilgrimage to St Thomas's shrine at Canterbury that he had been forced to abort the previous autumn because of events in Caithness. Most of our evidence indicates that the pilgrimage was Alexander's primary objective: on 13 July, Henry ordered repayment of £20 to Richard, bishop of Durham, who had loaned the money to the king in order to discharge the expenses due to Alexander whilst he was on route to Canterbury.[397] A Worcester chronicle, however, comments that Henry held a parliament at Worcester that same year, probably called in connection with the military operations planned in early July to restore the security of the Welsh march, which the Scottish king and his barons

were said to have attended.[398] There appears to be no other record of such a parliament, but Alexander might well have attended a gathering of Henry's magnates around that time, for his presence in England coincided with the arrival of news from France of the death of King Philip II. Alexander's fortuitous presence in England at this critical moment may have permitted pious intentions to be combined with high politics. Henry's government needed money for a likely reopening of war against France, and it was possibly on this occasion that Alexander began the negotiations over the Norfolk inheritance which resulted in possession of the wardship and the right to arrange the marriage of the Bigod heir being made over to him. It is likely that this same event saw the proposition made that Alexander's second sister should marry William Marshal, earl of Pembroke. Henry and his justiciar, however, already had other plans for Pembroke, designed to tie him more firmly into support for the English government.

A draft of a letter from Henry III to an un-named recipient, dated to shortly after their marriage on 23 April 1224, offers a range of reasons for why the English king had given his younger sister, Eleanor, to William Marshal.[399] It explains that it had been feared that Marshal would marry any one of a number of foreign brides through whom alliances would have been formed that threatened the security of England and made easier the entry of foreigners into the kingdom.[400] Amongst these possible marriages was that of William to Isabella of Scotland, a match 'where no small peril would have threatened King Henry, the closeness of Scotland to Ireland, and the lands of [William] Marshal, making the alliance the more dangerous'.[401] While the degree of potential threat in such a match may have been overstated for English domestic political effect, the view that a marriage bond between Alexander II's family and the Marshals constituted a grave strategic threat to English security suggests that, even after 1220, relations between the two kingdoms were not as smooth as the personal bonds between Alexander, Henry and Hubert de Burgh might suggest. Alexander and Henry may have been allies in the wars in Ireland and the Isles that William Marshal was ultimately to win for his brother-in-law, but the coincidence of Scottish interests with Marshal ambitions in the island was perhaps too close to risk the forging of any more direct personal bonds. The possibility of such an alliance had been ended through the intervention of Henry's government, but the men who framed the policy of the English crown had been reawakened to the potential political or diplomatic significance of the marriages of Alexander's remaining sisters. A match

with the mighty Marshal earl of Pembroke might have been unacceptable, but marriage to an English noble whose political stature or landholding was less threatening to the powerbrokers around Henry was attractive, not least to Hubert de Burgh, for whom it would have provided another potential ally. The opportunity for just such a union finally came in 1225, when Isabella, by that date almost thirty years old, was proposed as a wife for Roger Bigod, the still under-age heir to the earldom of Norfolk (see pp. 126–9 below). For both Alexander and Hubert, it was a hugely significant arrangement, strengthening personal political bonds and securing Scottish interests in a second major English earldom.

Although earlier promises to marry the Scottish princesses to Henry III and his younger brother had been set aside by the terms of the 1220 treaty, there is reason to believe that both Alexander and Henry continued to see such an arrangement as a possibility. Amongst the charges brought against Hubert de Burgh on his fall in 1232 was one concerning agreements made whereby, in return for Scottish renunciation of claims to northern English territory, Alexander would marry the daughter of King John and a sister of Alexander would marry John's son. As that agreement had not been honoured by the English, Scottish rights to seek restoration of the lost territory were reactivated. In the 1237 Treaty of York, the express renunciation of any past agreements between King John and King William that either Henry or Richard should marry either Margaret or Isabella, and also of an agreement between Alexander and Henry that the English king should marry Margery, the youngest of Alexander's sisters, suggests that the issue had indeed remained live long after 1220.[402] That Margery was regarded as a suitable bride for a member of the English royal house appears first in an account which survives now only in the fifteenth-century *Scotichronicon* of Walter Bower but whose detail suggests that it was based on a genuine thirteenth-century record. According to Bower, in November 1227 Henry's eighteen-year-old brother Richard, earl of Cornwall, arrived at Alexander's court and, after some days travelling with the Scottish king through Lothian, crossed to Fife to visit Queen Ermengarde and her youngest daughter, Margery, at Kinghorn.[403] Richard entered into serious negotiations for Margery's hand but, according to Bower, because Henry had made his opposition to the marriage known, the dower that Richard sought with his proposed bride was too great, and the Scottish magnates were opposed to her marriage to an English prince, the business was not concluded and the earl, laden with rich gifts, was sent home. No

English source gives notice of this visit to Scotland by Earl Richard, but the incidental information which Bower's account preserves is strongly suggestive of its authenticity. Displaying the propensity for dysfunctional familial relationships which seem to have been characteristic of the Angevin dynasty, Richard and Henry had had a violent quarrel in summer 1227. This episode started as a dispute over possession of a manor but had resulted in what was effectively a military confrontation between the king and Hubert de Burgh on one side and his younger brother, backed by seven senior earls, on the other.20 Although conflict had been avoided, Richard and his brother had not been reconciled, and the teenage prince's presence in Scotland in November–December 1227 could suggest that he was exploring alternative routes to obtaining the financial security and independent status which underlay his conflict with his brother. With only Bower's version of events and the basic confirmation of the context from English record sources to work with, it is impossible to be certain exactly what Richard had set out for Scotland to obtain in November 1227. The reference to lands and money in the chronicle account, however, implies that the move was a straightforward bid by Richard to free himself from his dependence on his perennially cash-strapped elder brother and to secure himself a landed base that was beyond the reach of Henry's tax-gatherers and the challenges of land-hungry English barons. Marriage to Margery, moreover, would have given him the royal bride that he regarded as a right befitting his own status. It would also have placed him in a closer personal relationship with Hubert de Burgh, the man with whom he had clashed in the summer. Most importantly, however, it would also have placed him within the succession to the Scottish crown. That Richard saw the potential of a throne for himself through this route can only be conjecture, and it may be still more unlikely given the fact that Margery stood fourth in the current succession after her two elder sisters and Margaret's infant daughter; but, given that Alexander still had no legitimate children after six years of marriage, Richard may still have regarded the possibility of a Plantagenet succession in Scotland as worth pursuing. In view of the resistance of the Scottish magnates to a similar plan proposed by King William in the 1190s, their reported hostility to Richard's efforts in 1227 are perhaps more explicable. His plans dashed, the young earl headed homewards, the sting of his disappointment only partly salved by the rich gifts with which his brother-in-law had loaded him. Bower's comment that Richard re-entered England via Carlisle to avoid meeting Henry, who

had come as far north as Durham in a bid to end the marriage negotiations, appears to be borne out by English records of Henry's presence in Durham around 9–10 December, and reference to their Christmas-time reconciliation at York is attested in other sources.[404]

As Henry was fully aware of his younger brother's approach to Alexander in respect of marriage to Margery in 1227, it is surprising that four years later he put forward himself as a suitable husband for the princess. Although it is possible that the proposal stemmed from the commitments made in the 1209 treaty between King William and King John that a daughter of the former would marry a son of the latter, according to English accounts the initiative in the proposals for Henry's marriage to Margery came from the English king himself in October 1231. Given Henry's then critical shortage of finance for his efforts to regain his lost heritage in France, it is likely that the proposal was an ill-considered effort by the English king either to free himself from Alexander's still unresolved territorial claims or to secure the short-term benefit of Margery's dowry. English chronicles focus on the reaction to the proposal rather than on the considerations behind it. They claim that Henry's suggestion aroused deep hostility amongst his nobles, but especially from Richard Marshal, who had succeeded his elder brother, William, as earl of Pembroke, and from Peter Mauclerc, duke of Brittany.[405] Roger of Wendover claims that this hostility stemmed from a view that it was unseemly for the king to marry the younger sister of the wife of Hubert de Burgh.[406] This particular association with Hubert is important, for no mention is made of the fact that Margery's other sister, Isabella, was married to the earl of Norfolk; for Roger of Wendover, the idea surely had come from the increasingly unpopular and politically isolated justiciar. Alerted by the good offices of Duke Peter to the dishonour that such a marriage represented to his royal dignity, Henry reluctantly abandoned his designs. There is some merit in suggestions that Hubert may have planted the idea in Henry's mind, or at least encouraged the king, for Pembroke and Brittany were two of the justiciar's greatest opponents at that date and their hostility to any such arrangement perhaps stemmed from recognition of how it would have strengthened his influence in government. Equally, however, the idea could well have been Henry's own, for it displays much of the character of the policies that would lead him in the later 1230s and 1240s into collision with his nobles: 'impulsive, enthusiastic and ignorant of political realities'.[407] That the marriage proposal was expressly repudiated under the terms of the 1237 Anglo-Scottish treaty implies

that discussions had gone further than the chronicle accounts of Henry's brief flirtation with the notion might otherwise suggest. Rather than strengthening Hubert's hold on power, the heightened personal hostility towards the justiciar which the proposed marriage is reported to have aroused amongst his political opponents may have contributed to the justiciar's fall the following year.

Despite the rebuff in 1231, Alexander still clearly regarded the marriage of his remaining sister as a political instrument to be deployed in pursuit of wider diplomatic strategies in England. Henry, for his part, may have been looking for a means of freeing himself from the obligations which he had inherited with the 1209 treaty, which may have been regarded as an impediment to finding him a suitable bride elsewhere in Europe. It may have been this growing dynastic imperative, made even sharper by a failed attempt to secure marriage to Joan of Ponthieu in April 1235, which drove him that July to give his blessing to an alliance that his government had rejected in the early 1220s: a match between Alexander's sister and the head of the Marshal family.[408] A link between the Scottish royal house and a family which held extensive lands in England and Wales, and was also still the dominant power in English-colonised Ireland, had been described as strategically dangerous when it was proposed that Isabella should marry William Marshal. Over a decade later, however, when the marriage of Margery to William's younger brother and eventual successor Gilbert Marshal was mooted, no such objection was raised, despite the stormy relationship between the new earl's late elder brother, Richard Marshal, and the English king. In 1233, indeed, Earl Richard had challenged the authority of the new government regime in England headed by Peter des Roches, bishop of Winchester; precipitated a civil war; and been instrumental in securing the escape of the disgraced former justiciar Hubert de Burgh from imprisonment in Devizes Castle. Amongst several charges levelled against Earl Richard by his political opponents at court was that he treasonably allied with the king's chief enemies, the French, Scots and Welsh.[409] In answer to this accusation, Richard was said by the chronicler Roger of Wendover to have responded that he, like the Scots and the Welsh, had been driven to break his fealty and take up arms due to the unjust actions against him of the king and his councillors. Two years later, with Earl Richard dead and Bishop Peter and his associates removed from power, government hostility to the Marshals and the need to pursue a hard line with the Scots had diminished. It was thus with Henry's formal approval that on 1 August 1235 at Berwick, fresh from

his victory in Galloway, Alexander presided over the marriage celebrations of Margery and Earl Gilbert Marshal.[410] According to the Dunstable chronicler, Alexander endowed the couple with 'a noble dowry in Scotland' and 10,000 merks in cash,[411] matching the figure that had been raised in respect of his two elder sisters by the 1224 aid. In securing this marriage for his youngest sister, however, Alexander had ended all possibility of obliging Henry to fulfil the still outstanding issue of providing the Scottish princesses with English royal husbands under the 1209 treaty.[412] Alexander must have been well aware of that consequence in 1235, but must have known since 1231 of the improbability of Henry ever marrying Margery. That Henry more than understood the implications of the marriage and, indeed, had compelling reasons for his acceptance of it is made clear in the rapidity with which his own marriage to Eleanor of Provence was negotiated and celebrated by proxy before the end of the year. Marriage into the mighty Marshal family, therefore, may have been part of the price for Alexander's acquiescence to the final breaking of the arrangement made between King John and King William, which had prevented Henry from finding an alternative bride.

Margery's marriage may have drawn a line under one dimension of the political significance of Alexander's female relatives, but it also served to throw another into sharp focus. In 1235, after fourteen years of marriage to Joan, Alexander still lacked a direct heir, male or female. His nearest male heir was his cousin, John the Scot, earl of Huntingdon and Chester, a man who, even more than his father Earl David, had made his career as an English rather than a Scottish magnate. Although Earl David had been preferred until 1198 as heir to the throne in the event of his elder brother's death, and remained heir presumptive should Alexander have died childless, there is no suggestion in any medieval source that Earl John enjoyed any similar recognition after his father's death in 1219. It has been argued that for as long as the marriage of Alexander and Joan remained childless, John remained heir presumptive, and it was only his death without surviving direct heirs in June 1237 that forced alternatives to be considered.[413] Alexander, however, may not have considered for many years that the succession was bound to pass to his cousin. Indeed, since the early 1220s he had been promoting the principles of primogeniture – male first, but then devolving to females – and legitimacy as governing factors in determining succession. As recently as 1234, Alexander had advanced the cause of the legitimate heiresses of Alan of Galloway over not only their illegitimate brother but also

their legitimate cousin, Patrick of Atholl, and more distant male collaterals. The Galloway example may have been chiefly the application of a principle to secure the break-up of a dangerously independent lordship on the fringes of the Scottish kingdom, and Alexander is unlikely to have countenanced the prospect of the partition of Scotland in a similar way between his sisters, but he had also signalled more generally here and in respect of the earldoms of Atholl, Caithness and Mar his preference for a narrower definition of the laws of succession than had hitherto been the case. It seems unlikely, therefore, that he would have considered Earl John as his heir in preference to the rights of his sisters and their families. Indeed, as Archie Duncan observed, had it been Alexander rather than Joan who died in 1238 would the Scots have had any alternative to recognising Queen Margaret and her husband King Hubert as their rulers?[414] That arrangement, however, gave rise to further problems. By 1235, it was only Margaret and Hubert who had produced a child, a daughter named Margaret, like her mother. Until Alexander produced his own legitimate heir, this niece Margaret,[415] the daughter of Hubert de Burgh, stood only two steps away from the throne of Scotland. The question of her marriage, therefore, was of prime importance not only to her parents, but, as fresh tensions developed in Anglo-Scottish diplomatic relations, also to her uncle and to the king of England.

When the cooling relations between Alexander and his brother-in-law grew icier over the winter of 1235–6 (see pp. 138–40 below), the position of the young Margaret grew in importance.[416] Following the early deaths of Earl John's sons, and Alexander's own continued childlessness within his marriage, while both men were still relatively young and of known fertility, the young Margaret had advanced to the position of Alexander's nearest heir in the next generation. As such, and given her position within English aristocratic society and therefore within the control of the English crown, she was a potential tool to be used by Henry to leverage a deal with Alexander. It is unlikely to be a coincidence that when Henry returned to the south from his meeting with Alexander in September 1236 at Newcastle, he issued a letter of safe-conduct for Countess Margaret and her daughter to come to meet him in October.[417] Given that one of the central issues at dispute between Alexander and Henry was apparently the latter's failure to honour the marriage agreements to which his father had committed himself by the treaties of 1209 and 1212, it is possible that Henry was considering arranging a match for the young Margaret

– whose place in the Scottish royal succession was perhaps being pushed by Alexander – that might help to mollify his brother-in-law. It was probably on that occasion that the countess revealed to Henry that her daughter was, in fact, already betrothed without his knowledge or permission having been sought. In an undated statement to the king in late 1236, Hubert explained that a clandestine relationship, of which he had been entirely ignorant until informed of it by his wife, had occurred between his daughter, the younger Margaret, and Richard de Clare, the young heir to the earldom of Gloucester and Hertford, who had been Hubert's ward.[418] The relationship 'had gone so far' between them, she had told him, that there was no question of marriage to another person. Given that the young Margaret and Richard were both aged under eleven at this time, it is extremely unlikely that their relationship had been sexual. Hubert himself expressed uncertainty, from what his wife had told him, over whether the young couple had in fact been married, but she had asserted that it had been done when she, their daughter and Richard were in sanctuary at Bury St Edmunds immediately after Hubert's fall from power.[419]

Hubert had great difficulty in persuading the infuriated Henry that he had no prior knowledge of or part in securing the marriage, a position made worse by Henry's wish to himself arrange a marriage for the hugely important Clare heir.[420] To even neutral observers, it must have seemed more likely than not that Hubert, who had common political and territorial interests with the Clares in the Welsh March, where he had built up an extensive network of lordships of his own, had sought to consolidate that position through the marriage of his daughter to his ward. The alliance of Burgh and Clare interests, which extended beyond Wales into Ireland, was indeed a logical step for Hubert, as it would have secured hereditary possession of the lordship which he had built up that had been entailed exclusively on his child(ren) by Margaret of Scotland, and their heirs. It is unlikely, however, that he would have jeopardised his chances of recovering his standing with the king by arranging this match without Henry's approval. Henry's anger may have been greatest over the loss of the political – and financial – advantage to be gained through disposal of Richard's marriage, but the marriage of Margaret de Burgh was of no less significance. It should not have been contracted without Henry's special licence and, consequently, he was infuriated by what he regarded as a further flouting of his authority.

The fallout from the marriage lasted longer than the marriage itself, for Hubert and Margaret remained in Henry's disfavour until October 1239 when, after Hubert had surrendered a group of his castles in Wales to the king, he 'remitted his rancour, anger and indignation against them . . . concerning Richard de Clare'.[421] For Hubert and his wife, that royal displeasure may have been worth it so long as the prospect of a strategic family alliance between the Burghs and Clares stood before them. Heiress not only to the earldom of Kent but, at two removes, to the kingdom of the Scots, their daughter had married one of the greatest heirs in England, Wales and Ireland. It was a truly glittering heritage, and the probability of a Clare succession to the Scottish throne itself, after Margaret and Hubert, moved a step closer in June 1237 with Earl John of Chester's death. Five months later, in November 1237,[422] the younger Margaret was herself dead, and with her perished the dreams of her parents.

Both parties involved in the 1220 treaty might have hoped that the formal end of the war and formal restoration of good relations between the two kingdoms sealed by the royal marriage the following year would engender a new spirit of harmony in Anglo-Scottish affairs. That optimism was not entirely misplaced, for despite brief periods of high tension in the 1230s, 1240s and 1250s, and the renegotiation of the settlement in 1237, generally good relations were maintained almost to the end of the thirteenth century. The episodes of high diplomatic tension aside, however, it would be wrong to suggest that 1220 saw the dawn of a new era of unprecedented Anglo-Scottish cooperation: the two kings may have hoped for smooth relations, but their officials on occasion may have seemed almost wilfully to have stoked up friction. At such times, Alexander's close relationship with his brothers-in-law in England helped to find easy compromises or quick solutions, but the frequency of relatively low-key disputes or the embittered exchanges caused by the unthinking enforcement of English government instructions by local officials suggest that, beyond the close bonds between their rulers, there was a widening gulf between Scotsmen and Englishmen. Hard-edged national identities were beginning to compromise the old easy exchanges between the two kingdoms.

That hard edge to identity was just one factor which complicated further Alexander's already complex inherited claims to the English northern counties. No mention of those claims was made in the 1220 treaty, but he would later state that it had been agreed in 1212 that

these would come to him as his wife's dower. Instead, under the terms of the peace agreement of 1219, the English government restored to him the lordship of Tynedale that his father had held, valued since 1159 at a mere £10.[423] Possession of it by King William had been expressly confirmed by King John in 1205,[424] so by the general settlement at the end of the civil war designed to restore the landed position in England to the *status quo ante*, Alexander's seisin had been confirmed. This territory encompassed most of the valley of the North Tyne from Simonburn north-west through Bellingham to the moors which separated it from Liddesdale in Scotland. Within it, he may have held little land in demesne, for a large tract in the central area of the valley formed the Comyn lordship of Tarset, and the de Ros family held a second substantial tenancy of the king. But possess it Alexander did, for in the pipe roll for 1221–2 and subsequent years, Henry III's keepers of Northumberland accounted for the £10 of land in Tyndale held by Alexander.[425] Despite a further meeting between Alexander and Henry in 1223 and considerable movement in Alexander's favour in respect of several important wardships in England (see pp. 125–9 below), there is no indication in any surviving material that the question of the rest of Northumbria was discussed. There is probably nothing sinister in this silence on an issue that had driven Alexander to military aggression in the past, for it had been made clear by the legates Guala and Pandulf that no settlements which so diminished the landed resources of the English crown would be entered into whilst Henry was still a minor. As Henry would only achieve his majority in October 1228, when he celebrated his twenty-first birthday, and his perfect majority of full adulthood four years later, Alexander must have accepted that he would have perhaps over a decade to wait until his right to the northern counties would be resolved.

October 1228 passed with no immediate movement by either Alexander or Henry in respect of Northumbria, but reference to 'difficult matters' to be discussed in a proposed meeting of the two kings at York in Lent 1229 should probably be understood as referring at least in part to that issue. Alexander was certainly preoccupied in 1228 with military operations against the latest MacWilliam pretender, but it is unlikely that an issue as important to him as his inherited claim to the northern counties would simply have been left to lie dormant at this key milestone. It is possible that Alexander was making a point to Henry when on 10 March 1229 he awarded his lands in Tynedale to his youngest sister Margery as her *maritagium*, reserving to himself the homage and service of his two main tenants

there – William Comyn and William de Ros – and the patronage of Simonburn church.[426] Also reserved, however, was the right for Alexander to resume the property should Margery marry someone from outside his kingdom and award instead lands of equivalent value within Scotland. In the context of 1229–30 and Henry's desperate search for cash to finance his campaigns to recover his lost lands in France, this arrangement – ratified subsequently by Henry – has the appearance of an invitation to Henry to honour the promise made by his father concerning the marriage of Alexander's sister.

Resolution of the linked question of Joan's dowry and Alexander's claim to Northumbria was problematical in the long term, but more contentious in the short term was agreement between the Scots and the English over the course of the border between the kingdoms, which was a corollary of Alexander's yielding his rights in northern England. Nearly two years after the treaty had been agreed, both sides were making formal complaints over the process of restoring the border between the two kingdoms to the position in which it had stood in the time of King John, but neither side – or, more particularly, their local officials – appeared willing to compromise easily. The two kings may have reached an agreement which ended the war, but the recent conflict had left behind a legacy of bitterness and rancour amongst the people who had borne the brunt of the hostilities at a local level. A very clear demonstration of this inflexibility came in May 1222 when an attempt was made to resolve a dispute over a very short stretch of the Anglo-Scottish border. The current dispute arose from an accusation from Alexander's kinsman Robert de Ros, lord of Wark-on-Tweed, and from the prior of Kirkham, that certain Scots had made land clearance for agriculture purposes on what they regarded as English territory at White Law in the Cheviots, between the valley of the Halter Burn on the Scottish side and the valley of the Trowup Burn on the English side. To resolve the arguments, the English government ordered a panel of leading Northumberland lords to convene to perambulate and settle the disputed march line.[427]

Kirkham's complaint, however, was just the latest round in a series of disputes which had begun three decades earlier over conflicting claims to properties along the border line; in the 1190s the priory had appealed to Rome in its conflict with the monks of Kelso Abbey over the patronage of the church of Kirknewton, while part of its latest complaint included an appeal made in 1216 to Rome concerning its

rights to tithes from lands being developed by the monks of Melrose at Trowup.[428] With a new treaty between the Scottish and English kings, there may have been an expectation that the matter would be resolved finally. What Hugh de Bolebec and his fellow panellists did in response to this commission is unknown, for their report to Henry does not survive. Given that the same issue was still rumbling on in 1245 (see p. 175 below), by which date further friction had been injected into already sensitive cross-border relations to heighten Scottish intractability, it seems likely that an inability to compromise had already become entrenched by the early 1220s. Suspicion, resentment and hostility amongst local officials and landholders glowering at each other across the border line had been present before the war, but a legacy of the conflict was even greater unwillingness to cooperate in mutual actions to resolve even minor disputes.

Suspicion of Scottish ambitions in the north of England also remained strong in respect of the appointment of Scottish clerics to English ecclesiastical benefices in the region. Seeming just cause for such suspicion came on the death of Bishop Richard Marsh of Durham on 1 May 1226, when a Scot emerged as the favoured candidate of the Durham monks to succeed him.[429] Marsh, a career crown servant who had been chancellor of England from 1214 and the nominee of the regency government to the politically important northern diocese, had been deeply resented by the Benedictine monks of his cathedral–priory whose rights of election had been ignored on his appointment in 1217. His erosion of the rights and liberties of the monks earned him their bitter hostility and encouraged the convent to seek to reassert its collective powers of election in 1226.[430] Contrary to the wishes of Henry's government, who intended to appoint another reliable crown servant to the see, the monks selected Master William Stichill, a Scottish academic who had pursued an active career at Oxford and who had been appointed to the archdeaconry of Worcester in 1218.[431] Opposition to Master William's election stemmed principally from the Durham community's defiance of the government's designs for the episcopal succession but, given his impeccable academic and ecclesiastical credentials, a case against him had to be based on other grounds. One approach was to target his nationality as a critical defect in his suitability to hold Durham. This tactic was not directed against all Scots being advanced to benefices in England, despite Bower's post-Wars of Independence xenophobic colouring of the account in *Scotichronicon*. Rather, it was used specifically in respect of the see of Durham, due to the strategic

importance of the bishopric and its possession of castles which were deemed of paramount importance in the defence of England's northern border.

The government at once sought to overturn the monks' election of Master William and appealed the case to Rome for a papal judgement. The depth of government concern was revealed in the instructions sent by Henry III to his representatives at Rome, which included written statements of the injuries inflicted upon England in the past through Scottish actions, and the danger of similar harm being done in future should any Scot be set over the bishopric.[432] This matter was purely an internal English issue, and Pope Gregory IX was persuaded to quash the election in May 1228, clearing the way for Henry III to secure the transfer of the loyal curialist Bishop Richard le Poer of Salisbury to the see of Durham.[433] Although Alexander was in no way involved in this dispute, it seems to have been well known in Scotland that the case used against Master William at Rome was grounded on the related issues of his nationality and a highly partisan account of past Scottish aggression towards England. Coming close on the heels of the prolonged foot-dragging of the English authorities over the lands assigned to Alexander in Northumberland, and the recent dispute over the border line, the stridently nationalist tone adopted by the English government in respect of Durham must have been troubling, particularly as King Henry was approaching his twenty-first birthday and the official end of his minority. Given that Alexander was sure to reopen his unanswered claim to the northern counties once Henry was legally of age, the anti-Scottish language of the case against Master William, and the direct reference to the strategic threat to England which Scottish possession of such an important northern power centre as Durham represented, would have left him in no doubt that his demands would be resisted.

In sharp contrast to these continuing signs of Anglo-Scottish friction in the north of England, the same period saw Scottish interests advance significantly in areas closer to the heart of the southern kingdom. Opportunities to boost his income from English sources encouraged Alexander to capitalise on his close relationship with Henry and with his brother-in-law, the all-powerful justiciar Hubert de Burgh. For Alexander, Hubert's effective control of government in England through the 1220s provided an unparalleled opportunity for access to and influence in the central decision-making processes. But the relationship was not one-sided: Alexander gave Hubert status by

association, provided the English justiciar with a powerful ally, and enabled him to widen his own local influence where he exercised administrative functions on Alexander's behalf or as the English crown's nominated intermediary between Alexander and the properties and persons over which the Scottish king had been granted authority. The acquisition of wardships was one route to gain, for not only did the holder receive the income from their ward's properties for the duration of the term of the wardship, but they also had the right to arrange their marriage where the ward was not a royal tenant-in-chief in their own right. Symbolically, the most important of these wardships, and possibly also the most lucrative, was that of the earldom of Huntingdon. Once he had finally gained possession of all of the components of the Huntingdon estate in 1220 from the various King John loyalists who had been entrusted with them on their seizure in the Magna Carta war, Alexander enjoyed the fruits of the earldom until April 1227 when his cousin, John, entered his inheritance and was granted seisin following his performance of homage to King Henry.[434] In February 1222 Alexander bid for and acquired for a 'fine' of 300 marks the wardship and marriage of the heirs of David de Lindsay, whose lands were concentrated in Warwickshire and Leicestershire, promising to pay this off in four equal instalments over two years.[435] Along with the Lindsay heirs, he also received the keepership of their share of the lands of their cousin, John de Limesey, sending south his cousin Henry, one of Earl David's illegitimate sons, and his clerk Thomas son of Ranulf, to take custody.[436] Two hundred marks of the fine had been settled before May 1222, leaving a balance of 100 to be paid into the exchequer by September. This was paid by instalments over the following year, and by the 1222–3 audit he was quit and should have begun to enjoy the profits of his investment.[437] With possession of the wardships, however, also came liability on the part of the guardian for settlement of the debts inherited by the under-age heirs. In December 1226, for example, as a consequence of his possession of the Lindsay wardship, Alexander was identified as owing over £244 in respect of the debts owed by Amabilis de Limesey, for which David de Lindsay had become liable.[438]

An even greater opportunity came with the death in February 1225 of Hugh Bigod, earl of Norfolk, whose heir Roger was still legally a minor. Hugh, a rebel in 1215–7, had been a son-in-law of William Marshal senior and became an important supporter of the English government in its efforts through 1223–4 to reassert royal authority and curb the power of men who had gained regional dominance as

agents of King John. The Norfolk estates had been heavily burdened with debts incurred through payments of fines and ransoms by Hugh's father, Earl Roger (1189–1221), but Hugh's political rehabilitation after succession to the earldom and the pardoning of many of his inherited debts through his loyal service in 1223–4 had gone far towards restoring the fortunes of the Bigod family. For King Henry's government, Hugh's death was somewhat fortuitous, since the ensuing wardship of the earldom enabled the diversion of its resources into the hands of William Longespee, earl of Salisbury, the man to whom was entrusted effective command of the expedition sent to Gascony in early spring 1225 under the nominal leadership of the king's younger brother, Richard of Cornwall.[439] Salisbury, however, did not have full control of the Norfolk properties, for when the wardship had been assigned to him it had been agreed that £100-worth of land was to be identified for the support of Hugh's heir for his marriage.[440] Already by that point, the English government had agreed that the heir, Roger Bigod, would marry Alexander's sister Isabella. On 11 May 1225, whilst Salisbury was overseas, King Henry granted a terce of the earldom lands as dower to Isabella, and three days later instructions were issued for Roger's delivery after his marriage into Alexander's hands, so that he might go to Scotland to spend some time there with his new wife.[441] The notification issued on the same day for the receipt and onward transmission of £1,000 promised by Alexander towards the costs of the Gascon expedition suggests that the marriage was part of a negotiated deal, possibly arranged during Alexander's delayed visit to England on pilgrimage to Canterbury in summer 1223,[442] which in part fulfilled the still outstanding terms of the 1220 Anglo-Scottish peace settlement. Following quickly on the heels of the aid of 10,000 merks which Alexander had levied from his nobles in 1224 towards the costs of his sisters' marriages, it must be suspected that the cash that Alexander was able to deliver to secure the Norfolk wardship and marriage, and contribute towards Henry's Gascon war-chest, stemmed from that source.

Details emerge following Salisbury's death in spring 1226 of the deal struck between him, Henry III's government and Alexander over the wardship of the earldom. To have possession of Roger and the wardship of his lands, Alexander had promised to pay Salisbury 4,000 merks, some 2,000 merks of which appear to have been made over by the time of the earl's death.[443] By August 1225 Alexander was tightening his grip on the Norfolk heritage through buying up the debts accumulated by the young Roger Bigod's father and grandfather,

instructions being sent to the bailiffs in the earldom of Norfolk appointed by the earl of Salisbury while he held the wardship for the identification and assignment of Roger's £100-worth of land, with the Scottish king's clerk Thomas son of Ranulf to be given possession.[444] Alexander, however, sought fuller possession of the Norfolk earldom during Roger's minority, and early in 1226 offered an additional 500 merks to have various properties and rights, including issues arising from the wards, marriages and escheats of Bigod tenants who held their lands by knight-service, and presentations to churches in the gift of the earls, which had been reserved in the king's hand.[445] Securing Isabella a suitable husband was an expensive process, but Alexander clearly expected to recoup substantial financial benefits during his possession of the Norfolk heritage whilst the young bridegroom remained legally a minor.

Throughout the manoeuvres concerning Norfolk, with the exception of the reference to Thomas son of Ranulf's involvement, there is no record of the process of negotiation until the additional agreement in early 1226. By its terms, all of the fresh assignments made to Alexander were to be 'kept by the hand' of Hubert de Burgh until Roger Bigod attained his majority. It is not explicitly stated, but it appears likely that Hubert had exerted his authority to secure favourable terms for Alexander. As brother-in-law of both Alexander and Roger, he was able to insert himself as the middle-man who ensured implementation of the agreement and who benefited accordingly. As a landholder in Norfolk and Suffolk, actual possession of these rights as the named agent would have helped to increase significantly Hubert's local influence. In the further discussions with Salisbury's executors in summer 1226, Thomas son of Ranulf emerges as Alexander's key agent and legal representative. Thomas represented Alexander's interests in the negotiations over the payment of the balance of the 4,000 merks that was due to the executors, arranging with Henry III that the money would be offset against a portion of Salisbury's debts to the crown, reaching agreement in person with Henry.[446] It was Thomas who, having negotiated the payment terms, delivered the agreed balance due at the exchequer in March 1227, following which Henry ratified the grant to him of the wardship.[447] He was, moreover, Alexander's appointed representative in the earldom of Norfolk, charged with possession of its lands and the burden of ensuring that its properties were adequately maintained, and is identified in 1227 as his bailiff there.[448]

Acquisition of the Bigod wardship brought Alexander's interests in England to a short-lived peak for, within a month of the sealing of the agreement over Norfolk, his wardship of Huntingdon ended when John son of Earl David achieved his majority in April 1227.[449] Alexander, however, maintained little direct interest in the Norfolk heritage from which to recoup his expenses through exercise of his rights of wardship, for in April 1228 it emerges that he had given possession of the Bigod lands to his brother-in-law Roger while the young man was still legally a minor. This was no generous wedding gift to his sister and brother-in-law, writing off the debts which he had assumed, for he retained the right to resume wardship of the properties should Roger die and his heirs be under age, and he received certain guarantees from Roger that he would not alienate portions of his heritage until he had officially come of age.[450] These protections were insisted on because Alexander, it transpires, expected Roger to repay to him the money that had been laid out to clear the way to a marriage deal unencumbered by the claims of other creditors.[451] Alexander had made a substantial investment to secure an honourable marriage for his sister, outlaying significant cash sums while making over the substance of the speculation to the couple, but he also provided himself with guarantees that there would be a return on that investment should Isabella, or more particularly Roger, die.[452]

What is clear from these deals is that Alexander had access to significant sums of cash or to substantial levels of credit, even although where exactly that liquidity came from is as yet poorly understood.[453] That facility gave him great leverage with his brother-in-law King Henry, whose levels of indebtedness were mounting rapidly as he attempted to finance the recovery of his ancestral lands in France.[454] It is in this context, accelerating with, first, the death of the French king Louis VIII in November 1226, and then Henry's early assumption of his full powers as king in January 1227 to capitalise on the inevitably long minority of the young Louis IX, that the advantageous arrangements which Alexander secured and established to protect his investments should be seen. Alexander had something that Henry needed – money – and Henry appears to have been prepared to consider almost any means of securing it. Extracting money from Alexander while Alexander was pressing for an answer to his long-suspended claims to the northern counties now that the English king was twenty-one was probably at the root of the 'difficult matters' which Henry hoped to discuss with his brother-in-law at York during Lent 1229, for which safe-conducts were issued for Alexander

and his retinue and arrangements made to escort him south from Berwick.[455] It is in the context of this business that Alexander's grant of Tynedale to his youngest sister, Margery, on 15 March at a meeting of his council in Edinburgh must be seen (see p. 122 above). Her marriage, as will be discussed below, was one of the chief issues left in suspension at the time of the 1220 treaty, and which Alexander sought to have addressed now that Henry had achieved his majority. This grant, intended ostensibly to support Margery in marriage, comprised the whole of the meagre territory with which Alexander's father had been compensated by Henry II for the loss of the earldom of Northumberland. Given that Henry, as superior lord of Tynedale, would be required to inspect and confirm this alienation by his tenant-in-chief, it is likely that Alexander used the grant to Margery to place two unresolved matters directly on the table before Henry. If Henry wanted Alexander's aid towards his war effort, Alexander in turn expected Henry to show some willingness to move positively on two issues that clearly still burned in Alexander's breast.

Perhaps in view of the tensions which Alexander's grant to Margery stirred up, it should be unsurprising that no meeting with Henry occurred at this time. Both kings, however, had other pressing business to resolve: Alexander was committed to dealing with the last MacWilliam rising, while Henry was himself distracted by the complex negotiations which ultimately persuaded Peter, duke of Brittany, to give him his homage and provide Henry with an invasion route into northern France through his duchy. Duke Peter's allegiance did not come cheaply: between 1230 and 1234 he received £13,333 in payments and subsidies from Henry.[456] Although English royal revenues had recovered significantly under the careful management of the minority government, they were still a fraction of the amount available to Henry's French enemies, and inflation had reduced their real value by almost half; the English crown could not sustain the costs of war and diplomacy on the levels being expended after 1227 without significant injections of cash from external sources. It is probably in this context that we should see the negotiations with Alexander which continued into summer 1229. Unfortunately, we have no record of the business which the Northumberland baron Roger Bertram was due to discuss with the Scottish king in late May, or for which Walter de Grey, archbishop of York, was preparing to journey to Scotland in June, but the efforts that Henry went to through the second half of the year to win allies amongst Alexander's councillors and to demonstrate his generosity to Alexander's subjects

perhaps suggest that the 'difficult matters' were not progressing entirely as Henry would have hoped.[457] Nevertheless, amongst the items accounted for at the English exchequer of 1229–30 by Brian son of Alan, sheriff of Northumberland, was the expense of carrying 1,000 merks in cash received from the Scottish king and taken from Berwick to York.[458] Whilst this money might have been connected with the balance owed on the Norfolk wardship arrangements it might, equally, have represented the fruits of Henry's persistent negotiations.

In early December, Henry again instructed a safe-conduct to be issued for Alexander to come for a meeting with him at York over Christmas, and set in place once more arrangements for his escort south and his expenses whilst in England.[459] Their meeting lasted for four days, during which Henry is said to have lavished gifts on his brother-in-law and celebrated Christmas with splendour and festivity in the midst of a great gathering of his court.[460] The success of their meeting might be measured in the £2,000 sent to Henry by Alexander before 8 April 1230 towards the costs of the English king's imminent expedition to Brittany.[461] Something of the tone of Henry's probable negotiating style with his brother-in-law in the months before their Christmas-time meeting can perhaps be taken from his concession that the money from Alexander was a gift made entirely by that king out of generosity rather than as the result of any obligation owed by the Scottish to the English king. Indeed, Henry's acknowledgement of the gift expressly forbade anyone to take the payment as constituting any kind of precedent. Bearing in mind the regularity with which the English crown raised the matter of its supposed rights of overlordship during future episodes of diplomatic impasse – 'a useful stopper' of Scottish claims, as Professor Duncan styles it[462] – it is not unlikely that Henry had aired this claim and floated the duty of a vassal to provide his lord with aid, financial as well as advisory and military, in pursuit of his 'just quarrels'. The big stick approach, however, had been followed by a more conciliatory tack, which appears to have been far more successful in winning Alexander around. We do not know what concessions Henry may have promised Alexander in order to secure his financial support and his agreement that some of his magnates would serve in the English king's forthcoming campaign, but Alexander apparently returned to Scotland content with what he had been offered.

Henry's 1230 campaign was costly and achieved little other than more expense for the English crown, which he could ill afford. Having

agreed a truce with the French that would last until 1234, Henry needed to reorganise his finances both to maintain payment of the subsidies that were being used to keep Duke Peter and various Poitevin barons in his allegiance and also to gather the resources necessary to fund an army once the truce expired. It is probably in the context of that pressing need that Henry's confirmation at Christmas 1230 of Alexander's settlement of Tynedale on Margery should be seen.[463] He needed Alexander to be amenable to further approaches, and a straightforward ratification of this potentially explosive grant was one step towards keeping the Scottish king well-disposed. The opportunity for consolidation was, however, not to come, for the unexpected death of William Marshal early in 1231 was swiftly followed by war raised by Llywelyn ab Iorweth 'the Great', prince of Gwynedd, against the Marcher lordships in central and south Wales.[464] Discord amongst the Marcher lords, whose number included Hubert de Burgh, weakened their resistance to Llywelyn, a situation worsened by Hubert's opposition to Richard Marshal's succession to his brother's lands and titles, given his adherence to the French as holder of the Marshal family's Norman estates during the recent war. Welsh successes, including the seizure of Hubert's castle and lordship of Cardigan, forced Henry and his justiciar to lead an expedition into the March, where they were based from August until early October. Apart from the strengthening of Pain's Castle in Herefordshire, the campaign saw no major military operations but it was, nevertheless, a major financial outlay at a time when Henry's resources were seriously stretched. It was on his return to England from this expedition in October 1231, Roger of Wendover reports, that he voiced the possibility of his marriage to Margery.[465] As discussed earlier (see pp. 115–16 above), this proposal was most probably a reflection of Henry's critical shortage of cash and need to answer the demands from Alexander for a final resolution of issues that had been festering for over two decades. The rapid unravelling of Henry's ill-considered scheme over winter 1231–2 perhaps finally exposed to Alexander the emptiness of his brother-in-law's promises to address the issues at stake. As political turmoil erupted in England in 1232, culminating in the fall of Alexander's once all-powerful brother-in-law Hubert de Burgh, the Scottish king seems to have begun to consider alternative solutions to his long-standing grievances.

The proposed marriage of Henry III and Margery of Scotland, although bound up immediately in Henry's pressing need to stabilise his finances to underwrite his system of alliances and military

preparations for war in France, arose directly from the agreements made between their fathers in 1209 and 1212. The failure of that proposal to mature, coupled with the fall of his brother-in-law – the one man whom Alexander may have regarded as capable of securing him a favourable outcome to any renewed negotiations concerning the northern counties and the unfulfilled treaty obligations – marked a turning point in Anglo-Scottish relations. Confronted by a new English governmental regime dominated by men who had been key officers of King John down to 1216, he may already have been inclining towards a new and more aggressive policy towards Henry when what was probably the last significant constraint on him was removed. On 11 February 1233 his mother, Queen Ermengarde, died.[466]

After her role as a mediator between her husband, King William, and the English King John in 1209, and a brief flurry of charter-witnessing in the closing year of William's life, Queen Ermengarde becomes almost invisible in the surviving historical records for the nineteen years of her widowhood. It is easy to dismiss her as inconsequential, sidelined once her headstrong teenage son had ascended the throne, but as her role towards the end of William's reign and her successful advancing of members of her French kin to important positions in Scotland indicate, she was a skilful political operator, and there are hints and signs that she may have continued to exert considerable influence over him.[467] Ermengarde, indeed, may have been one of the most consistently conciliatory, if not actively pro-English, figures in the inner circle of Alexander's immediate family and household. This stance may be represented in her apparent patronage of the cult of St Edward the Confessor in Scotland, a cult that had made little headway outside of Westminster itself since the saint's canonisation in 1161. Ermengarde may have been the foundress of the Hospital of St Edward at Berwick-upon-Tweed, to which she made endowments between 1214 and 1233, but her principal St Edward dedication was the Cistercian abbey that she founded jointly with Alexander at Balmerino in north Fife.[468] This apparent devotion to the cult of the canonised Anglo-Saxon king, last of the old West Saxon dynasty to occupy the English throne, might appear extraordinary, but it has been argued that it formed part of a wider policy on the queen mother's part to restore Anglo-Scottish relations after the tensions of the opening years of her son's reign.[469] Furthermore, it has been suggested that the appeal to St Edward's intercession represented by the foundation of Balmerino – preparations for which were already under way in 1225 – may have

been aimed at aiding the young Queen Joan, who was probably placed in her mother-in-law's care in 1221, to produce Alexander's longed-for heir.[470] While Alexander was closely associated with his mother in the foundation of Balmerino, it was in reality Ermengarde's own project: it was she who raised the finance and obtained the lands with which it was endowed.[471] The rapid disappearance of St Edward from the name of the abbey after her death, edged out by the traditional Cistercian St Mary with whom Edward had originally been paired in the dedication, appears to emphasise Ermengarde's personal association with the cult. The dropping of St Edward probably also signals the monks' recognition of the failure of the policy towards England that she had favoured, and the potential liability to their prospects of future patronage from Alexander that their continued promotion of the saint might pose.

At the time of Ermengarde's death on 11 February 1233, Joan was twenty-three and had still not produced a child for Alexander. Having already fathered at least one bastard child, Alexander knew it was not he who was incapable of producing children. While his mother was alive, Alexander may not have dared to contemplate a future with a different queen than Joan, not least because of the rift with her brothers which any suggestion of an annulment of the marriage would cause. Having still to secure all that he believed was his right by the 1220 settlement, annulment was also probably not something that Alexander was as yet prepared to consider seriously. Nevertheless, there are indications over the following years of a progressively widening distance in Alexander and Joan's personal relationship, despite a brief emergence of the queen as a participant in diplomatic negotiations between her husband and her brother.

One further hint of a new direction in Alexander's policies around the time of Ermengarde's death is the possibility that he may have revived his efforts at Rome to secure the rite of coronation and unction for Scottish kings. As no Scottish record survives of a renewed bid to secure this rite from the papacy in 1233, however, we do not know the circumstances which prompted any such approach. Our only evidence for the Scottish move comes from English records, which on 6 May 1233 refer to Henry III's ratification of an appeal which Archbishop Walter Grey of York was about to make at Rome against the Scottish king's request for coronation. The granting of such a request, it was said, would have been to the prejudice of the royal dignity of the English king and the liberty of the Church of York.[472] It

has been suggested that the bid arose from an attempt by the Scottish clergy to secure metropolitan status for one of the Scottish bishops – hence the reference to the threat to York's liberties – and that the reference to coronation arose from the assumption that any such Scottish metropolitan would seek to confer that king-making rite on present and future Scottish monarchs. Alexander may have encouraged any such clerical approach to Rome with just that consequence in mind, but he certainly does not appear to have voiced any overt support for them in Scotland, let alone at the curia.[473] The timing of the archbishop of York's appeal to Rome, however, points to a Scottish approach having been made in the latter part of 1232, around the time of Hubert de Burgh's removal from office and the establishment in his place of the regime headed by Peter des Roches, bishop of Winchester. It may have been nothing more than opportunism on the part of the senior Scottish clergy at a time when the government of England was in turmoil, a vacancy existed in the see of Canterbury, and widespread regional disturbances and riots were directed against Italian clergy who had been appointed to English benefices;[474] the Scots, in any approach to Rome at this time, may have hoped to be seen as good, loyal sons of the papacy, in marked contrast to the rebellious English. Nothing more is heard of this shadowy Scottish request or of York's appeal; Pope Gregory IX, if he received any request from the Scots, chose quietly to ignore it.

Even had Henry been willing to open serious negotiations with Alexander in 1233, political developments in England made any consistent or concerted efforts in that direction impossible.[475] By summer, England was slipping into a civil war. Opposition to Henry's new government and its policies, perceived widely as dominated by foreigners – 'Poitevans' as all of its French-born members were labelled by the increasingly xenophobic English chroniclers – was led by the unlikely figure of Richard Marshal, earl of Pembroke, a man who was married to a Breton heiress and who had held the Marshal family's Norman estates as a vassal of the French crown whilst his elder brother had held their English, Welsh and Irish lands. Bishop Peter viewed military conflict as the best solution to this opposition and seems to have embarked on a policy designed to drive his opponents into taking up arms against his government, all the time assuring Henry that his course was the only route to freeing his royal power from the humiliating limits set by Magna Carta. When hostilities finally broke out in late summer 1233, Henry's officials in Ireland managed quickly to overrun Earl Richard's lordship of

Leinster, but in Wales the earl and his vassals not only mounted a stubborn defence of his key castles, stalling the king's offensive there but, in alliance with Llywelyn of Gwynedd, seized the initiative and captured key territories from the king's men. Late in autumn a group of the Marshal's knights even managed to rescue Hubert de Burgh from his imprisonment at Devizes in Somerset, a hugely cynical exercise given the recent history of personal hostility between the two men, but tremendously symbolic on account of Hubert's reputation as a man who had once before saved England from foreigners. With the war against his political opponents standing at best in stalemate, and the end of the four-year truce with Louis IX looming in June 1234, it was perhaps fortunate for Henry that Alexander had difficulties of his own to resolve in Galloway. Even the unexpected death of Richard Marshal in April 1234 could not save Henry and his government from humiliation. Territorial concessions to the Marshal and his supporters, a formal reconciliation between king and dissidents at Gloucester in May, and the recognition without challenge of the succession to the Marshal inheritance of the late earl's younger brother, Gilbert, simply underscored the failure of Bishop Peter and the political ineptitude that Henry had displayed over the previous four years. The civil war in England had ended, but it was too late to make any difference to the likely outcome of the renewed conflict with France, for Henry had neither the money nor the manpower to intervene. In November Duke Peter submitted to Louis IX.

In Scotland, where he had been forcefully asserting his royal authority in the settlement of the Galloway inheritance dispute following the death of Alan of Galloway in February 1234, Alexander had perhaps been following events in England with increasing bemusement and mounting concern. Far from favouring the Scots, Alexander probably understood that Henry's humiliation in 1233–4 made a favourable settlement of his own outstanding grievances less likely; Henry could afford in neither political nor financial terms to make concessions to his brother-in-law that might be perceived by his increasingly nationalistic baronage and senior clergy as weakening England further in favour of another foreigner. Indeed, the humbling of Henry by his own lords made it more likely that he would pursue a hard line in any negotiations with Alexander. On a high political level, Henry needed to reassert his personal authority and recover some of his lost prestige. Alexander, nevertheless, also recognised that Henry's current difficulties, coupled with what appeared to be his own unquestioned dominance within Scotland, represented the best

opportunity that had arisen since 1220 to press his claims; it has been argued that sometime during 1234 he gave his grievances a formal airing and demanded their long-promised resolution.[476] On a personal basis, however, relations between the brothers-in-law remained outwardly cordial – Henry sent Alexander the gift of a silken robe and a gold and jewelled chaplet for his sister[477] – but it soon became apparent that Henry was deeply suspicious and fearful of any initiatives by Alexander in respect of the Anglo-Scottish treaty obligations.

How cordially Alexander looked upon his gift from Henry might have changed dramatically only a few weeks later when he received a bull issued by Pope Gregory IX on 4 January 1235 setting out the reasons why Alexander should maintain his peace with, and perform his due liege homage and fealty to, King Henry.[478] The papal letter to Alexander can hardly have been a belated response to the 1233 rumours of a Scottish request for the rites of coronation and unction, and surely arose from information sent to Pope Gregory by Henry and his government in 1234. Such an approach to the papacy might, as suggested by Archie Duncan, have been triggered by Alexander's having made a formal demand for a settlement of the issues that remained outstanding under the 1220 treaty terms, but it is perhaps more simply a reflection of the increasingly paranoid behaviour of Henry, and the fears of his current government, that the Scottish king might intervene on behalf of the rebels in 1233–4, as he had done in 1215–17. After all, Peter des Roches and his associates in Henry's government had been key figures in the closing months of the regime of King John, and prominent in the war against Alexander and his allies in England. More to the point, they had been instrumental in securing the downfall, disgrace and imprisonment of Alexander's brother-in-law, Hubert de Burgh. Henry, quite literally, could not afford a war with Alexander, nor could he afford to buy him off. It had taken papal intervention in 1216–18 to force Alexander to make peace; in 1234 the English government had attempted to pre-empt the possibility of war by securing Pope Gregory's unequivocal support.

The case which Gregory presented in his letter was based on a highly partial version of Anglo-Scottish regnal relations since 1174, which had probably been provided to the pope by Henry or his proctors at the curia. The Scottish kings, he had been told, since the time of Henry II in England had made liege homage and fealty to the kings of England; also, the Scottish nobles were bound by treaty

obligations to compel their kings to adhere to their homage and fealty to the English king; neither would harbour fugitives from the other's justice; and the men of either kingdom should receive the lands they had held in the other kingdom before the agreement had been made. In short, Henry was claiming the same level of lordship over Scotland as had been enjoyed by his grandfather under the Treaty of Falaise. Henry had, moreover, requested papal confirmation of those rights, and Gregory was now throwing his weight behind the English king's claims. As Archie Duncan has argued, such claims made directly by Henry to Alexander 'would have implied enforcement, war' but, coming through the medium of the papacy, delivered a threat which might have been sufficient to render Alexander more amenable to negotiations.[479]

Throughout this time, Alexander must also have been involved in the negotiations that led to the marriage on 1 August 1235 of his remaining sister, Margery, to Gilbert Marshal, earl of Pembroke (see p. 117 above). Since Gilbert had been formally reconciled with Henry in May 1234 and admitted to the full Marshal heritage, this union cannot be construed as part of an alliance designed to exert additional pressure on Henry. The English king, indeed, is reported to have given the marriage his blessing. As discussed above, by marrying off the last of Alexander's sisters, it was now impossible for that most troublesome of issues lingering from the agreements between King John and King William – the marriage of a son of the former to a daughter of the latter – to be honoured. For both kings, therefore, the ground had been cleared at last for a final resolution of Alexander's inherited grievances, albeit with the papal reminder of the Scottish king's obligations towards his supposed English lord hanging in the background as a warning of what might be expected if Alexander proved too intransigent.

There was no rush to a settlement after the clearing of the ground afforded by the marriage of Margery and Gilbert. Indeed, the process appears to have settled back into the painfully slow exchanges which had characterised Anglo-Scottish diplomacy throughout Henry's minority. Queen Joan appears to have been in England in the weeks immediately following the marriage, perhaps acting as an intermediary between her husband and her brother.[480] It was possibly through her that Henry believed that Alexander was prepared to come for a face-to-face conference to resolve the issues outstanding between them. On 8 December, Henry caused letters of safe-conduct to be

issued for Alexander and Joan to come with their retinue to London for discussions.[481] Henry was certainly determined to ensure that the conference would deliver a substantive result, on 12 December issuing a summons his magnates to attend in the week following 14 January 1236 'to consider certain matters recently arisen touching himself and his kingdom', and giving instructions for preparations by the archbishop of York, bishop of Durham and various northern lords for the escort to London of the Scottish king and his retinue.[482] Henry may have expected Alexander to come to London in mid-January 1236 but, although Joan spent the whole of the Christmas period in England in the company of her sister, the widowed Countess of Pembroke, and her sister-in-law Queen Eleanor, her husband remained in his own kingdom.[483] After fifteen years of patient waiting and renegotiation, Alexander wanted action to implement what he regarded as long-accepted agreements, not yet more talking that dragged out a process that should have been settled before the end of 1221.

It was in response to communications from the English government – probably regarding Alexander's failure to attend the London conference – and as a follow-up to a Scottish non-response to the papal letters of January 1235, that on 26 April 1236 Gregory IX sent a fresh letter of admonition to the Scottish king.[484] This advised Alexander that the pope knew him to be the liegeman of the English king and, therefore, obliged to do nothing to the detriment of the kingdom of England. Despite that obligation, however, Gregory had been informed that Alexander was neglecting his oaths and was actively plotting against his liege lord. For the love he bore towards both kings, the pope urged Alexander to observe his obligations towards Henry, adding the critical rider that by doing so he would more fittingly earn Henry's affection. Just as in late 1234, when he had sought to bring papal pressure to bear on Alexander rather than provoking a confrontation, Henry was avoiding making a direct threat towards Alexander, using instead the papal admonition to make him aware of the seriousness of the situation and holding out the prospect of a more satisfactory resolution to be gained through negotiation. Pope Gregory's letter, however, was sent too late to have any effect on Alexander's actions in spring 1236 and, when Henry's prorogued council eventually gathered at London on 28 April, Alexander again failed to appear in person. Instead, he sent a formal delegation headed by a skilled lawyer, the royal clerk Master Abel, to demand adherence to past agreements which set out his rights.[485]

Alexander had possession of a charter which set out those rights clearly, his envoys stated, and there were many magnates, who had sworn on oath to secure its implementation, who could be called upon to attest that fact. According to the chronicler Matthew Paris, the substance of Alexander's claim was that Northumbria had been settled on him by King John as the dowry of Princess Joan, that he possessed a charter to that effect from the English king, and there were numerous witnesses, clerical and lay, who could support his claim.[486] Alexander's first line of attack was to attempt to shame Henry into honouring his obligations but, according to Paris, he made it clear that he would resort to war if no satisfaction was obtained. Paris's account suggests that there was widespread anxiety on the part of the English king and his advisors concerning the network of alliances on which Alexander could draw to make good his threat. There was, he commented, the rumour of an alliance with the Welsh prince, Llywelyn ab Iorwerth, a man whose power threatened the stability of the whole of the west March. Of more concern, however, was the very real threat represented by Alexander's new brother-in-law, Gilbert Marshal, head of a family and political circle with many grievances against Henry and his government. Most tellingly on the part of a chronicler whose hostility towards foreigners colours most of his narrative, however, Paris commented that the most important weapon in Alexander's armoury was the justice of his cause. There were those amongst the governing elite in England, it seems, who recognised that Alexander had right on his side. In the face of such opinion, Henry could not deny the validity of Alexander's claims but, rather than make an immediate judgement, he again postponed a decision.

Just over a month later, Henry issued letters of safe-conduct for Alexander and his retinue to come to Newcastle for face-to-face talks.[487] Negotiations surrounding the meeting appear to have continued over the summer, but on 29 August, as the initial term of the safe-conduct neared expiry and no meeting had been held, its cover was extended until mid-October.[488] In early September, however, Henry, accompanied by, amongst others, Earl John of Chester and Huntingdon, Earl John of Lincoln, and the archbishop of York, was already north of York, and before 15 September had reached Newcastle.[489] There, he was met by Alexander and, it appears likely, by his sister Queen Joan,[490] who may indeed have spent the whole period from late summer of the previous year in England. Given that the crux of the discussions which followed was the question of what had been promised to Alexander in respect of Joan's dowry and

the consequences of non-payment, it is highly significant that her brother issued charters to his sister granting her possession for life of the manors of Driffield, in eastern Yorkshire, and Stanton in Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire, the latter being a confirmation of a temporary award already made to her. As these were personal grants to Joan and limited to her lifetime only, with no suggestion of possible inheritance by any children that she and her husband might have in future, coupled with the fact that she seems to have been living increasingly apart from Alexander, it is possible that Henry was preparing for the unravelling of his sister's marriage. Alexander was certainly prepared to threaten extreme measures should his demands regarding Northumbria fail to be met. An annulment of his marriage to Joan is mentioned nowhere in any of the texts detailing the discussions in autumn 1236, but after fifteen years of childless marriage, uncompensated for by even the dowry that Alexander regarded as his birthright, it must be accepted as a strong possibility that Alexander raised the issue.

Alexander had confronted Henry with a dilemma: face down his demands and risk war; or yield and be forced into a territorial surrender that would threaten the stability of the political status quo built in England since the end of the civil war. Critically short of revenue, the English king could not afford a prolonged military confrontation with the Scots, not least because he could not be sure of the loyalty of the Earl of Pembroke and his extensive network of alliances, and the prospect of Welsh intervention in any conflict still hung ominously in the background. Handing Alexander control of Northumbria, however, risked alienating families like the Bolebecs, who had built their dominant positions in northern England as defenders of crown interests against the encroachment of Scottish power since 1215. The most recent letter from Pope Gregory, moreover, had clearly failed to make any impression on Alexander. Henry had no cards of any value left to deploy; the old solution of a marriage between Henry or his brother and one of Alexander's sisters was no longer an option, and it is likely that Henry saw that the marriage of Alexander and Joan, upon which the current settlement was founded, was a hollow reality. His solution was to do that at which he excelled: prevaricate. Henry and his advisors knew that awarding Northumbria to Alexander, even as a fief to be held within the kingdom of England, would have hugely weakened crown authority in northern England and sent the wrong signals to the various predatory powers eyeing what was left of the Angevins'

continental lands. The right in Alexander's claims, however, was widely recognised in England and beyond, and made failure to do him justice as dangerous as meeting his demands. Should Henry deny justice in this case, what confidence could there be in just settlement of any case of land rights in England? To postpone having to make such a critical decision, Henry offered to find Alexander 80 merks-worth of land elsewhere in England, 'that the lands of his kingdom might not be mutilated in northern parts'.[491] It was hardly equal to what Alexander was claiming, but an opening offer had been made. In doing so, Henry had publicly acknowledged the right in Alexander's claim. For his part, Alexander had secured the concession that he had striven for throughout his reign, but he was probably pragmatist enough to understand why Henry could not simply take the concomitant next step and concede Northumbria to him. Eighty merks-worth of land, however, was nowhere near adequate compensation for yielding his claim to an earldom and its resources. Confident that he had won this first round, Alexander agreed to consider the offer, and the conference broke up after three days, with peace apparently assured in the interim.

One fact which had emerged clearly in the Newcastle conference and the protracted negotiations leading up to it was that it would require a new approach to break both parties from the entrenched positions that had become established over the previous two decades. That new approach was offered, as in the diplomacy which had led to the 1220 treaty, by papal mediation. Henry had requested in May 1236 that a papal legate be sent to England and, after a drawn-out process, on 12 February 1237 Pope Gregory announced the appointment of Otto de Tonengo, cardinal–deacon of St Nicholas in carcere Tulliano as his legate *a latere* to England, Wales and Ireland.[492] Otto's appointment was not connected with the current Anglo-Scottish negotiations but appears to have been intended primarily to assist Henry in securing settlement of his domestic political problems and to resolve current tensions between the king and the English clergy. It was only some seven weeks later, on 24 March, that the pope issued a second mandate which instructed Otto to act as intermediary between the kings of England and Scotland, and only at the beginning of May that he was appointed legate to Scotland also.[493] When he reached England in mid-July, Otto found Anglo-Scottish negotiations still deadlocked, and tension between the two kingdoms running high.

Since the end of the Newcastle meeting, a succession of issues had

arisen to heat the atmosphere further. One of the complaints made by both kings was that each was harbouring the outlaws of the other, or attempting to compromise the fealty of their subjects.[494] This matter may have gone back to the English civil war of 1233–4, when it has been suggested that Alexander had given refuge to the supporters of Earl Richard Marshal, who had been driven out of Ireland by Henry's loyalists and to whom he provided bases from which they waged a piratical campaign against English ships in the Irish Sea.[495] Certainly, on 18 June 1237, Henry had issued instructions for action against the renegades William and 'Robert' Marsh and their Scottish associates, who had been attacking merchant vessels operating between Bristol, Drogheda and Dublin.[496] The implication was that Alexander had been doing nothing to prevent their action or to halt the involvement of his subjects in their pirate raids. It remained a live issue long after 1237, resurfacing as a significant factor in renewed Anglo-Scottish tensions in the 1240s (see p. 168 below). Pressure on Alexander was increased when Henry ordered the closure of Irish ports to Scottish vessels and the arrest of Scottish merchants in those towns, for shipping between south-west Scottish and east coast Irish ports was a significant element in Scottish trade.[497] Instructions for naval action in the Irish Sea were accompanied by orders to be vigilant for Flemish mercenaries travelling to Scotland disguised as merchants,[498] and for repairs to be made to royal castles in Northumberland: Henry's visit to Newcastle had revealed the legacy of disrepair that his perennial money woes had brought through his failure to finance adequate maintenance. Substantial construction work was ordered at Newcastle and Bamburgh, sufficient to make both castles defensible.[499] Their refurbishment was not ordered specifically as a preemptive measure against the threat of Scottish invasion, but the strengthening of royal fortresses in the north of England cannot have reassured Alexander that Henry was genuinely prepared to negotiate a firm peace. Amidst this aggressive posturing, however, moves to reach a final settlement had continued; a proposed meeting of negotiators at Doncaster in March 1237 was cancelled by Henry only at the last minute, as several of his named delegates were needed to deal with urgent business elsewhere.[500] A token of goodwill towards Alexander might be seen in June 1237, when he was confirmed in seizin of the earldom of Huntingdon following the death of Earl John, but the terms of the concession were grudging and denied explicit recognition of the more than century-old association of the earldom with the Scottish crown.[501] It was into this highly charged situation that Otto stepped.

Barely three weeks after the legate arrived, he had made arrangements for a face-to-face meeting of the two kings at York, and on 15 August a safe-conduct, to last for a month from Michaelmas, was issued for Alexander and his retinue to come there.[502] There is some debate over when the conference began and how long it lasted, but its substantive business appears to have been conducted between 22 and 25 September.[503] Although the so-called 'Treaty of York' that resulted clearly favoured England in the range of obligations that it cancelled,[504] the outcome did bring some advantages to the Scots. The opening clauses of the treaty comprise a succession of formal renunciations by Alexander of his claims against Henry.[505] He quitclaimed in perpetuity his hereditary rights to the three northern counties of England. The 15,000 merks paid by William to John 'for certain conventions', which had not been honoured by the English king, was written off. Alexander then freed Henry from the obligations concerning a marriage between Henry or his brother Richard and Alexander's sister Margaret or Isabella. Finally, in the first proof of a formal agreement on this matter, he freed Henry from any obligation to marry his youngest sister, Margery. In return, Henry granted Alexander 200 librates of unspecified land within Cumberland and Northumberland, excluding lands with castles, to be held free of all service burdens other than for his homage and fealty and an annual render of a year-old hawk at Carlisle. Within this territory, Alexander was granted an effective jurisdictional liberty with regalian powers. For the security of the agreement, Alexander had fourteen nobles – principally Scots but including his new brother-in-law Gilbert Marshal and the earl of Hereford as great English magnates – swear to uphold the peace and bind themselves, if they broke the treaty terms, to submit themselves to the pope's jurisdiction, awarding the papacy to appoint any suffragan of the archbishop of Canterbury as his judge–delegate on the matter. Importantly, however, the agreement was made between the kings as equals: both Alexander and Henry swore to observe the treaty through the proxies of one earl each (Menteith and Warenne respectively), the first recorded instance of a Scottish monarch swearing vicariously in this manner in a settlement with an English ruler.[506] Alexander appeared to have removed the question mark against his status as a king vis-à-vis the claims of overlordship of the king of England, a gain which would significantly strengthen his hand in future diplomacy. One potential flaw in this new position was that Alexander remained the *fidelis* of the English king for his new lordship in northern England, for which he gave his homage and

fealty, but the York treaty was explicit that this submission was for his English lands and not for his kingdom. The legacy of Falaise appeared finally to have been laid to rest, and the consequences of David I's opportunism and William's obsession, which had poisoned Anglo-Scottish relations for a century, had been swept away.

'Peace dividends' followed swiftly for both sides. Only three days after the conclusion of the York conference, Henry issued instructions to Hugh de Bolebec, sheriff of Northumberland, to limit his expenditure on the repairs at the castles of Bamburgh and Newcastle which had been started through fear of a Scottish invasion; 'as a firm peace has been entered upon', he said, 'the king is not now in fear of his castles as before'.[507] Instructions, too, were sent to the Irish justiciar ordering the reopening of Irish ports to Scottish merchants, and to other officials ordering the release of Scottish merchants, their ships and goods which had been detained there.[508] Henry also moved swiftly to set in motion the process for finding the 200 librates of land promised to Alexander, appointing officials to oversee the process on 28 September. A month later, their appointment was confirmed, and Henry directed them as to where they should assess and assign lands, stipulating that his manor of Penrith and the royal forests in Cumberland should be excluded from their evaluation.[509] Despite Henry's personal optimism and certainty in the peace, anxiety remained high concerning Scottish intentions amongst the military leadership of northern England. As late as November or December, Hugh de Bolebec was writing to Henry to ask for clarification of his earlier instructions to undertake repairs at Bamburgh and Newcastle, and alerting the king to the likely cost of that work. Furthermore, he warned Henry that David de Lindsay, one of Alexander's knights in the lordship of Tynedale, was building 'a house of remarkable thickness' (Dala Castle), protected by powerful defences and in which Lindsay planned to install a garrison of 'men who wish evil to the kingdom of England', and requested instructions from Henry on how he was to proceed.[510] Henry, however, was uninterested; the emergency in the north had for the time abated and there was no need to spend any further money on what was now a redundant defence programme.

Having completed the business of the York conference, Alexander appears to have headed north around 25 September. Joan, however, did not accompany him, but, according to the Chronicle of Melrose, she travelled in the company of her sister-in-law Eleanor of Provence

to Canterbury, 'for the sake of prayer'.[511] Apart from this reference to her desire to visit St Thomas's shrine to pray, there is no other indication of why she chose to remain behind whilst Alexander returned to Scotland, but it is likely that she was already in poor health and was seeking a cure at Canterbury; Melrose reports that it was a serious infirmity that detained her in the neighbourhood of London.[512] The route to Canterbury was somewhat circuitous, for on 11 October she may have been at Worcester for the enthronement of Walter de Cantilupe as bishop,[513] and there are suggestions that she was unnecessarily prolonging her time in England. According to Matthew Paris, 'she disdained to return although very often called back by her husband',[514] but this charge may simply be Paris's waspish gossip-mongering and monkish misogyny at work. Joan's health certainly deteriorated in the early winter, and by January 1238 she was resident at the royal manor of Havering-atte-Bowe in Essex, north-east of London, which tallies with both the Melrose account and Paris's description of her last days. Her brother was solicitous of her well-being and directed a flow of gifts towards her to make her stay more pleasant and to cover the costs of her household and general expenses. On 10 January, for example, the parker John son of Philip was instructed to take two or three does under his supervision to provide the Scottish queen with venison.[515] Two days later, William de Haverhulle, keeper of the king's wine, was instructed by Henry to deliver a cask of French wine to his sister.[516] There may have been a visible improvement in her health, for on 23 January Henry wrote to the Treasurer instructing an advance of £40 to be made to his clerk, Peter Grimbaud, to cover Joan's expenses as she journeyed to Scotland, while a similar instruction was issued to the keeper of the vacant see of Durham to pay any additional money as was necessary for the expenses of Grimbaud, William Talebot, and others of the king's own retinue who were escorting her north.[517] A fortnight later, a second writ from Henry to the Treasurer, instructing payment of £60 to cover Joan's expenses, indicates that she had still not begun her homeward journey.[518] By 21 February, Joan had deteriorated to the point that she was drawing up her will, and she received the concession from her brother that the income from the manors of Stanton and Driffield for two full years from the following Michaelmas could be assigned by her to cover all bequests.[519] A final payment of 100 marks was made to Grimbaud by Henry's writ on 2 March; two days later, according to the Chronicle of Melrose, lying in the arms of both Henry and her younger brother, Richard of Cornwall, Joan died

at Havering-atte-Bowe.[520]

No letter survives from Henry to his brother-in-law informing him of his queen's death, and no record survives of how Alexander responded to the news. In England, however, Henry took charge of arrangements for Joan's funeral. Two days after her death, he instructed that the sheriff of Wiltshire should arrange for the marble tomb that Master Elyas of Derham was sculpting at Salisbury to be taken to the convent of Cistercian nuns at Tarrant in Dorset, where it would be placed over Joan's grave.[521] Why Tarrant was chosen as her burial place is unknown, but it is striking that there was no suggestion that her body should be brought north for burial in any of the Scottish royal mausolea, and that a decision on the location in England was taken so swiftly. It is also striking that Henry did not instruct her burial at Westminster. Tarrant, which had been founded by Richard le Poer, bishop first of Salisbury then, until his death in 1237, bishop of Durham, was later to become the richest Cistercian nunnery in England, but it was at that time a relatively new and undistinguished convent. On Bishop Richard's death, Queen Eleanor took over as patron of the convent, and it is possible that this transfer into royal patronage was the factor which determined its selection as Joan's burial place. Joan's interment there was, in effect, an act of patronage, for it was likely that gifts for masses and prayers for her soul would flow in from her husband and her own family. Gifts certainly flowed to the nuns from Henry, but there is no surviving evidence to indicate that Alexander made any special benefaction to Tarrant or any other religious institution in commemoration of his wife. Joan's brothers mourned their sister deeply; Alexander's failure to make even a gesture of sorrow suggests only cold indifference to the fate of a queen who had failed to deliver an heir in whom both Scottish and English royal blood flowed. Just as the treaty of York had drawn a line beneath one episode in recent Anglo-Scottish political relations, so too did Joan's death for another, ending for a time the direct personal link between the two royal dynasties.

The events of 1237–8 marked a watershed in Alexander's relationship with both Henry III and England more generally. Although, as explored in the next chapter, Henry's erratic personality produced episodes of stress in relations between the two kingdoms before delivering a new accord which secured peaceful conditions that lasted almost until the end of the thirteenth century, Alexander's personal interest and involvement in England never returned to the

level reached between 1220 and 1237. His focus in England became his lordship of Tynedale and Penrith – the more so since the Huntingdon inheritance was resumed by Henry III into English royal hands and Earl John's heirs-general were compensated with property elsewhere in England – and there is little sign that Alexander pursued an active involvement in land or wardship acquisition elsewhere in the kingdom after he had secured possession of his compensation for his surrendered claims to the northern counties. The award to Alexander of the promised 200 librates proved to be a more drawn-out affair than either king had envisaged as they parted at York in September 1237, but once it was assigned to him to his satisfaction, the Scottish king settled down to management of his gains. Apart from the moments of extraordinary tension produced more by Henry's overactive imagination than from real circumstances, however, there was no deliberate distancing evident between the former brothers-in-law. Rather, Alexander's drive to consolidate his grip over the whole of mainland Scotland and its adjoining islands took him in a different direction for the last decade of his reign.

SIX

Alexander Triumphant

Even as Alexander celebrated his sister's marriage at Berwick, the newly won peace in Galloway was beginning to unravel. His failure to capture or kill Thomas son of Alan seriously weakened the settlement which he had imposed on the lordship, for a focus for all opposition to the Scottish takeover remained at large and was able to gather powerful support from ambitious foreign backers.[522] Thomas, a young man in his late teens or early twenties, had with Gilrod's assistance been able to draw on the extensive network of alliances which his father had forged in Man, Gaelic Ireland and with Hugh de Lacy to obtain military support for a renewed bid for the lordship.[523] The reported ill-discipline of the force left in Galloway under the command of Walter Comyn, earl of Menteith may have made it easier for Thomas and his new allies to regain control of much of Galloway when they returned in the autumn. Alexander's speedy victory appeared to be facing an equally speedy overturning; but in circumstances for which we have no surviving detail, Gilrod entered negotiations with Patrick, earl of Dunbar, who had been sent by the king with a new army to quell the uprising, and Gilbert, bishop of Whithorn, who were reported to have been close friends of Alan of Galloway. Melrose suggests that Gilrod saw that he faced overwhelming odds and opted to submit, but it appears that he did so without consulting Thomas. Deprived of his principal ally, the young claimant then recognised the futility of further resistance and surrendered.

The Melrose narrative implies that this second insurrection was over before the end of 1235, but Matthew Paris, who misdates the start of the first rising to 1236, suggests that the final resolution to the conflict occurred in April 1236, a date accepted by most modern commentators, given that Alexander only entered Galloway in July 1235.[524] Paris, however, conflated the battle of 1235 with the surrender of Thomas in 1236, but the latter appears to have been a relative non-event hastened by the defection of his chief supporter and secured by negotiation rather than a military action. Although Melrose suggests that Thomas suffered only a brief imprisonment in Edinburgh before being released by the ever-merciful Alexander, the Lanercost Chronicle reports that he was handed over to his youngest half-sister,

Dervorguilla, and 'shut up until decrepit old age in the confines of Barnard Castle'.[525] With the pretender safely incarcerated and the last pockets of military opposition crushed by the Earl of Dunbar's army, the Galloway emergency was finally over and Alexander was free to set in place his new prescription for the government of the lordship.

The significance of this extension of Scottish royal authority into Galloway should not be underestimated. Despite the progressive integration of the region's ruling elite into the wider political communities of Scotland and England from the mid-twelfth century onwards – and increasingly so from the 1180s – the lordship proper had remained beyond the effective reach of Alexander's power. While Alan of Galloway and his brother Thomas, earl of Atholl had served Alexander loyally and prominently, and in return had exercised significant influence at the heart of his council, the status of Alan especially vis-à-vis his relationship with the Scottish crown in respect of Galloway itself had been ill-defined and, on occasion, politically ambivalent. The military and naval power of the Galloway brothers had been of immense importance to Alexander in his war against King John and in the projection of Scottish influence into the northern Irish Sea and the Hebrides, but especially in the later 1220s and early 1230s there had been occasions where the boundaries between Scottish interests and Alan's own ambitions had become dangerously blurred. Although Alexander had encouraged Alan in his increasingly aggressive projection of Scottish, as opposed to Galwegian, power into the insular world of the Atlantic seaboard, the response it had provoked from the Norwegians alerted Alexander to the dangers of blurring the distinction between private enterprise and Scottish strategic interests in this region. As Keith Stringer proposed, amongst the many factors influencing the king's decision to enforce partition of the lordship was recognition that the concentration of such power in one pair of hands, as was constituted by the fighting potential of Galloway, was incompatible with Alexander's ambitions for his own kingship.[526] From 1236, the undefined nature of the relationship between the rulers of Galloway and the Scottish crown was removed; they were great tenants of the king of Scots, and owed him specified service for their lands.[527]

Partition of the Galloway heritage between the husbands of Alan of Galloway's three daughters, of whom the most important was Roger de Quincy, the greatest Anglo-Scottish landholder of the day, delivered Alexander an unprecedented level of security on the western

seaboard of his kingdom. All three men were firmly embedded in the socio-political milieu of mainland, and essentially eastern and lowland mainland Britain, with no significant prior links with the hybrid Norse–Gaelic maritime culture of the Atlantic coastlands. As David Carpenter commented, 'there was no chance of *them* plundering about the Western Isles',[528] or indulging in the kind of private initiatives which Alan had pursued, albeit with Alexander's explicit approval. If there were to be any initiatives driven forward in Man and the Isles, it would be under Alexander's personal leadership, not that of men who manipulated his ambitions in pursuit of their own dynastic agendas. Division of the lordship and establishment of reliable agents as the social and political heads of the regional community and its network of kindreds was the chief vehicle for enhancement of royal authority in Galloway, but it was followed in subsequent years by the intrusion of royal officers and the extension of the administrative mechanisms of royal lordship and justice. A sheriffdom based on Dumfries may have had its territorial sphere extended west of the River Nith to encompass the eastern half of Galloway in the late 1240s, and probably at the same time a second sheriffdom for the territories west of the River Cree was created, with its administrative seat at Wigtown.[529] These provisions did not mean that Alexander's domination of Galloway was accepted unquestioningly after 1236 – the imposition of royal sheriffs may have been a development made in response to a short-lived regional rebellion against Roger de Quincy's rule in 1247 – but he could be reasonably confident that the former lordship would deliver no future threat to his kingship or kingdom as its rulers had done, deliberately or accidentally, in the preceding century.

Although it has been suggested that Alexander accepted the terms offered to him at York in September 1237 (see pp. 144–5 above) to secure a peace with England that would allow him to concentrate on securing Galloway,[530] it seems more likely that it was the settlement of the Galloway issue that enabled him to bring the pressure to bear on Henry III which in turn delivered the Anglo-Scottish treaty. If the surviving chronicle evidence for events in 1236–8 is an accurate reflection of the state of the kingdom, then this was indeed a period of unprecedented domestic unity. Apart from a catalogue of obituary notices and the accounts of the Newcastle and York meetings between Alexander and Henry which delivered the 1237 treaty, most of the items recorded were foreign events which impinged little, if at all, on the affairs of Scotland. In retrospect, this brief episode of peace can be

seen as marking the apogee of Alexander's power and authority within his kingdom. It also, however, was the period which threw the question of the king's continuing lack of heirs into sharper contrast, for between June 1237 and March 1238 a succession of deaths had removed his closest male relative, Earl John of Chester and Huntingdon, his most likely female successor, Margaret de Burgh, and his wife, Queen Joan. It was not that there was no heir; as discussed above, Alexander's eldest sister and her husband Hubert de Burgh would almost certainly have been recognised as king and queen should he have died without a legitimate heir of his own. Given, however, that the de Burghs had produced no further children after the now-dead younger Margaret, the Scottish lords would have been required to look beyond the reign of a possible King Hubert and Queen Margaret to the young earl of Norfolk, Roger Bigod, and his ageing and childless wife, Countess Isabella, and beyond them to the youngest of Alexander's sisters, the recently married Margery and her husband, Gilbert Marshal. How the prospect of a Marshal succession to the Scottish throne might have gone down with Henry III, let alone Alexander, is an intriguing question for which we have no answer. There is, however, no indication that any of the sisters was recognised as heir presumptive, and none, too, that the oldest male collateral relative of the king, the teenage Robert Bruce V of Annandale, eldest grandson of Earl David of Huntingdon, was named heir at this time.[531] Alexander, after all, was only forty and determined to have a son of his own; the lack of a statement of the succession is perhaps a sign of his refusal to accept that he would fail in this most basic duty of a king to his realm. Unquestioned lordship over mainland Scotland was no doubt immensely satisfying to Alexander, but the lack of a son of his own to whom he could pass that lordship must have been a continuing and bitter disappointment to a king who had spent the previous two decades in ending all challenges to his own lineage. There was much unfinished business for Alexander to attend to in the months after Joan's death, but finding a new bride seems very much to have been the priority.

Remarriage was not the only business which occupied Alexander's mind in 1238–9. At the time of Joan's death there were two outstanding items related to the York treaty and Anglo-Scottish relations demanding resolution. The first was the question of the 200 librates of land awarded to Alexander as compensation for renouncing his claims against the English crown. It was a matter of immense political significance, for the whole of the York settlement would

stand or fall by the issue of compensation for the Scottish king's renunciation of his inherited rights in northern England. The second, the future position of the earldom of Huntingdon and its relationship with the kings of Scots, was less important in territorial or financial terms, as the claims of Earl John's various female relatives would take precedence over his reversionary rights, but it was still a matter of great political symbolism. In respect of the first, quite rapid progress had been made in the winter of 1237–8, and by mid-March 1238 a formal process had been set in train to make an extent and valuation of royal demesne lands in Cumberland and Northumberland from which an award could be made to the Scottish king, the detail of the assessment process being set out in royal letters patent of 29 May.[532]

There was high confidence in the English administration that this process would run quickly and smoothly, for the royal mandates instructing the extent also provided for the payment to Alexander of all income received from any properties assigned to him that had been received since the date of the York treaty. Certain properties, chiefly the royal manor of Penrith and a group of neighbouring royal manors which had been placed in the keepership of Robert de Ros, had initially been excluded from the assessment, but it was recognised by Henry at an early stage that these might also need to be added to the land on offer.[533] Despite the financial difficulties of the English crown at that time, Henry was apparently ready to reach whatever settlement was necessary to complete his treaty obligations. Having yielded up his claims to so much both in terms of cash outlay for unfulfilled marriage promises and in respect of his paternal heritage, however, Alexander was prepared to haggle hard and not simply accept the first offer made. By mid-July, Alexander's envoys to Henry, his knight Bernard Fraser and his clerk Thomas son of Ranulf, had let it be known that their master was not satisfied with what he had been offered.[534] The tone of Henry's response seems particularly eager to please Alexander and assure him that there was no ill-intent on his part, promising that the English envoys overseeing the process and the jurors making the assessment would swear before the clerk of the legate Otto that everything was proceeding in good faith. Should Alexander still be dissatisfied with what was on offer, the business would be referred back to Henry who would do 'what is right and befitting the honour of both'. Henry may have hoped to use a fresh marriage tie to defuse the tension (see p. 156 below) but Alexander wanted real property, not the intangibility of advantages to be gained from a familial bond with the Plantagenets; that had failed to deliver

much of substance in nearly two decades.

Alexander's dissatisfaction resulted in impasse, and over three years after the negotiation of the York settlement Henry was obliged to order a cash payment of £400 for the arrears of two years' income from the promised but unassigned lands.[535] Continuing negotiations became increasingly frosty, with neither party prepared to compromise on even a form of arbitration.[536] Eventually, with a renewal of his military efforts to recover his lost continental domains planned for 1242, in late autumn 1241 Henry was forced to blink and make concession to Alexander. On 21 November, instructions were issued to the joint sheriffs of Cumberland to make the assignment of land, and in the exchequer return for 1241–2 it was recorded that they had awarded Alexander the vills of Penrith, Salkeld, Langwathby, Carlanton and Scotby.[537] In February 1242, Henry issued a string of instructions to the bishop of Durham empowering him to assign the 200 librates of land in Cumberland, Northumberland and Westmorland, and authorising the bishop to offer an additional twenty librates should Alexander not accept the first offer.[538] On 22 April, the deal appears to have been settled finally to Alexander's approval, and a formal charter was issued granting him the manors of Langwathby, Salkeld, Scotby, Scourby and Carlanton, plus sixty librates in the manor of Penrith, followed by instructions for payment of all outstanding income owed and for seisin to be granted to Alexander through the proxies of his chancellor, William de Bondington, bishop of Glasgow, and chamberlain, Henry Balliol.[539] Almost five years after the treaty negotiations at York, Alexander had at last gained the compensation for his surrendered claims. Along with the Scottish king's Tynedale properties centred on Wark, the lordship of Penrith, as the lands awarded in 1242 became known, was valued at £368 annually in 1290.[540] For Alexander, obstinacy and tenaciousness on this issue had delivered a highly advantageous result.

The last of the major outstanding issues carried over from the time of the York treaty was the question of the earldom of Huntingdon. On the death of Earl John in June 1237, Alexander had claimed and been given seisin as lord of the earldom.[541] That arrangement, however, did not necessarily bring much beyond titular possession, for John's widow and his sisters, nieces and their husbands all had claims to a portion of the earldom and its revenues. For the Chester-Huntingdon heiresses, resolution of their claims through protracted negotiations with King Henry commenced in October 1237 and dragged on into the

mid-1240s.[542] Those negotiations began under the shadow of a formal request made on Alexander's behalf in Henry's court at Worcester by a high-powered delegation of Henry Balliol, William Lindsay and Master Abel for restitution to him of the earldom.[543] Given that one of Earl John's sisters and two of his nieces were great heiresses or dowagers in Scotland, this claim by Alexander may have been nothing more than a registering of interest in Huntingdon and a reminder that the earldom had been held in person by the kings of Scots down to the time of William, who had granted it to his younger brother. The heiresses received real property assignments from the dismantled earldom; Alexander and his heirs received only the shadow of the former great Midlands heritage which King David I and his heirs had held, the 'honour of Huntingdon'. This essentially worthless entity was formally bestowed by Henry III on the young Alexander III in 1256,[544] but it is likely that his father had held this empty honour before him. What Alexander II had done in October 1237 was protect the heritage and rights of his heir, whoever that might be.

For the nearly forty-year-old king of Scots, the question of an heir was probably very close to the front in his mind at the time of the claim to Huntingdon. After sixteen years of marriage he still had no child of his own beyond one known illegitimate daughter. His visible fertility emphasised his wife's apparent sterility, and this factor probably widened the gulf that seems to have opened between the royal couple in the years after 1233. Alexander wanted – needed – a legitimate child of his own to succeed him; almost every one of his key acts as king to that point had been designed to enhance the royal inheritance which would be passed to his heir. It is thus perhaps why Queen Joan's death in March 1238 was seemingly so little mourned by her husband. For Alexander, the removal through death of a consort who had been incapable of producing an heir for him but whom he could not easily divorce represented both opportunities and problems. The chief opportunities were to find a fertile new wife and remedy the problem of his lack of a direct heir as swiftly as possible. The main problems were to find one who was of appropriate rank, suitable age and sufficiently distant in kinship from his late wife. Some comment has been made of the fact that he looked beyond England for his new bride and that this was a significant contributor to fresh tension in Anglo-Scottish relations, but there is little indication, beyond a comment by the xenophobic chronicler Matthew Paris about King Henry's finding the choice of a French bride unacceptable, that Alexander's former brother-in-law held strong views on whom the

Scottish king should or should not marry.[545]

The search for a new wife, said to have been at the urging of the magnates of the kingdom through their concern about the lack of an heir,[546] must have been started very soon after Joan's death. It was possibly in respect of a proposal made by Henry for Alexander's remarriage to the sister of Henry's wife, Eleanor of Provence, that Henry wrote to Alexander in summer 1238, barely five months after his own sister's passing. If that marriage was the 'business' alluded to in Henry's somewhat opaque letter, Alexander had evidently not been persuaded of the desirability of another match which tied him to the English royal house.[547] Alexander's envoys in the search for a new bride were led by the justiciar of Scotia, Walter son of Alan, and the chancellor, William de Bondington, bishop of Glasgow.[548] Who else was considered is unknown, but a suitable bride was swiftly identified in Marie de Coucy, daughter of the powerful north-eastern French nobleman Enguerrand III, sieur de Coucy, whom Alexander probably had met during the Dauphin Louis' campaign in England in 1216–17.[549] Marie carried Capetian royal blood, being descended from Robert, count of Dreux, the younger brother of King Louis VII of France. This exalted lineage perhaps more than compensated for the fact that rich and politically powerful though her father was, the Coucys were merely important regional lords rather than dukes or counts.[550] Negotiations with her family were apparently completed by early 1239, for Marie accompanied the justiciar and chancellor to Scotland for her marriage to Alexander at Roxburgh on 15 May.[551] While the king may have hoped that his new and probably very young bride would quickly provide him with the son he wanted, over eighteen months passed before Marie became pregnant. As the somewhat relieved tone of the *Gesta Annalia* indicates, it was nearly at the end of his twenty-seventh year in the kingship that Alexander's long looked-for heir – who was named Alexander after his father – was born at Roxburgh on 4 September 1241.[552] Given that, after six years of childless marriage to Margery, the death of Alexander's brother-in-law Gilbert Marshal on 27 June 1241 from injuries sustained in a tournament[553] had reduced almost to nothing the prospect of any other heir being produced within Alexander's immediate family, the birth of a son must have been greeted with celebrations that were tinged more than slightly with relief. Provided the child survived the perils of infancy and grew to manhood, Alexander had the male heir to whom he would pass without challenge from any rival the greatly enhanced heritage he had

created.

If his marriage to a distant cousin of the French king did cause a rift in Alexander's relationship with Henry, any breach had been mended before the end of 1241. Indeed, Henry's confidence in the apparent confirmation of friendship between him and his erstwhile brother-in-law represented by the Treaty of York was underscored in advance of the expedition which he led to Gascony in May 1242. The English king underlined his confidence in the strength of his relationship with Alexander by entrusting the defence of northern England to him. A proclamation to that effect was made by Henry at Portsmouth on 5 May,[554] and this arrangement seems directly contrary to any suggestion that Alexander's French marriage had been viewed as a hostile act by Henry and his councillors. The chronicler Matthew Paris believed that this was also the occasion on which Henry confirmed the betrothal of his daughter Margaret to Alexander's infant son.[555] Such an early date for the marriage agreement, with the Scottish prince barely eight months old, has been called into question,[556] but the positive atmosphere of 1242 seems at least as likely an occasion for the betrothal as the endeavour to defuse the diplomatic crisis that brought the kingdoms to the brink of war in 1243–4, which has been proposed as the alternative. Uncertainty over the date of this agreement notwithstanding, in the late spring of 1242 Alexander appeared to be at the height of his powers and secure in his mastery of Scotland. Within weeks, however, the peace of his realm had been shattered and his authority questioned by a domestic political crisis which seemed to spring from nowhere.

The trigger for the crisis was the death in what were considered suspicious circumstances at Haddington of Patrick of Atholl, son of Thomas of Galloway and still under-age heir to the earldom of Atholl. According to the Chronicle of Melrose, Patrick had been murdered along with two companions in their lodgings by 'certain ill-wishers' and the building burned down around their bodies to conceal the act.[557] Matthew Paris adds further detail, reporting that Patrick had been slain by Walter Bisset, whom he had bested in a tournament at Haddington, and who had barricaded the young man and his companions in a barn where they were sleeping and had burned it down with them trapped inside.[558] The Lanercost chronicler, who had access to material that survives in no other near contemporary account, claims that Patrick was about to fall heir to a great inheritance, and that he had been forewarned of the danger in which

this placed him in a letter sent by the wife of his killer. Lanercost adds that Patrick's enemies had surrounded the burning house and prevented him from escaping from it, and that the slain youth was buried in the Franciscan convent at Haddington.[559]

No reference is made to the incident in *Gesta Annalia*, but what is probably a contemporary St Andrews account of events, which contains details not given in the Melrose report, forms the basis of the fifteenth-century narratives offered by Andrew of Wyntoun and Walter Bower and reproduced in later chronicles.[560] This version of events reports that King Alexander and Queen Marie had been in Moray when they had received news of the return to England of King Henry, and that they had begun to come south to meet with him. En route, they had stopped at Walter Bisset's castle of Aboyne in Aberdeenshire, where Bisset pressed them to stay for two nights. Alexander, we are told, remained for one night only, but Marie stayed on for a further three nights. This emphasis on Walter Bisset's efforts to keep the king and queen in his company is constructed to lend a suspicious air to his actions; subsequent details imply that he was establishing a personal alibi. According to the Wyntoun/Bower St Andrews account, the Haddington tournament occurred whilst Bisset was at Aboyne with his royal guests, but a number of Walter's men had been present at the jousting. It gives much more detail than Melrose or Matthew Paris of where the crime was committed, placing it in Patrick's own 'estimable lodging', a 'fine manor, princely lodging and house' located on the High Street at the north-western end of the burgh.[561] As in the Melrose account, Bisset's agents slew Patrick and two of his companions in the house and then burned it down to make it appear that their deaths had been accidental. The reason for this heinous crime, the St Andrews account claims cryptically, was the result of 'long-standing hostility between their predecessors'.

Despite his efforts to escape blame, the Melrose chronicler reports that direct responsibility was laid at the feet of John Bisset, nephew of Walter, who was said to have incited John to murder Patrick.[562] Matthew Paris likewise reports that the Scottish magnates quickly identified Walter Bisset as the guilty party and, led by Patrick earl of Dunbar, they attempted to take revenge on him.[563] The St Andrews version also reports the widespread suspicion that Walter was responsible, stressing again the care he had taken to distance himself visibly from the act but at the same time underscoring the fact that his men were there in strength and numbers.[564] Both Paris and the St

Andrews narratives, however, point to the support that Bisset received from Alexander and Marie, the queen especially being prepared to swear on oath that he was innocent. Bisset himself, moreover, arranged for the excommunication of any men who had participated in the crime, having the ban proclaimed in his own chapel and having the bishop of Aberdeen proclaim the sentence in all the churches of his diocese. Such public protestations of innocence, however, were insufficient to convince his accusers.

In mid-July, Alexander was at Perth with the prelates and magnates of his kingdom for a Church council.[565] Bisset's chief accusers amongst the nobility used this gathering as an opportunity to put pressure on Alexander to take action against him. Unwilling to be forced into taking summary action against Walter, but recognising that he must be seen to take his magnates' concerns seriously, he deferred any judgement and set a date for Walter to answer his accusers in court at Forfar. Both Paris and the St Andrews account describe the efforts of Bisset's enemies to mete out their own justice on him in defiance of Alexander's reservation of judgement to his own court.[566] While Paris names Patrick, earl of Dunbar as the leading figure in the action against Bisset, setting aside the post-Wars of Independence anti-Comyn spin given to the St Andrews version by Walter Bower, the latter identifies Alexander Comyn, heir to the earldom of Buchan, and his nephew John Comyn the Red, described as relatives of Patrick of Atholl, as the chief protagonists. The Comyns launched attacks against Bisset's property and possessions, forcing him to take refuge within his castle at Aboyne, until Alexander imposed calm and ordered them to cease their harassment of a man who was yet to be proven guilty. Clearly suspecting that the Comyns might still defy him and attack Bisset before he had had an opportunity to defend himself in court, the army of the province of Mar was ordered to protect him and escort him over the Mounth to the gathering at Forfar, probably in early August.[567] Tensions in the kingdom were running high, and the king's relationship with his leading magnates was being tested to the limit.

At Forfar, Bisset was accused of Patrick of Atholl's murder before Alexander by the Comyns and their political associates.[568] When his offer to prove his innocence through trial by combat, or by the oaths of as many worthy men as his accusers might demand, was rejected, rather than risk submitting to the judgement of his evidently hostile peers, Bisset placed himself and all of his property at Alexander's mercy.[569] Again unwilling to be rushed into a judgement, Alexander

set a date of 26 November for a formal pronouncement to be made at Edinburgh. According to Bower's thirteenth-century source, the Edinburgh gathering was rowdy and highly charged, with the Bissets arriving in force with their following, and the majority of the magnates demanding that Alexander execute Walter and all of his supporters. Neither the Melrose chronicler nor Bower's St Andrews dossier discuss any of the actual court proceedings, and it was the view of the former that it was on the strength of rumour rather than hard evidence that John, Walter and other unnamed Bisset accomplices were outlawed.[570] Bower adds that they had promised, swearing on relics, to pass as pilgrims to the Holy Land and to remain there for the rest of their lives for the soul's weal of Patrick of Atholl, a detail corroborated by Matthew Paris.[571] And so a year of extraordinary domestic political tension, in which the authority of the king had been openly defied by a large segment of his nobility, came to a close.

What had lain behind this unprecedented succession of challenges to Alexander's government of the kingdom and exercise of justice? Almost every modern analysis of the act points to land, power and political influence – or loss thereof – as the dominant factors underlying this extraordinary event.[572] Patrick had been close to reaching his majority and entering his heritage – the earldom of Atholl inherited from his mother and the lands in Galloway, Lothian and Ulster that had been held by his father – which raised the expectations of those families closest in kinship and political affinity to him but affected adversely the interests that others had had in that heritage during the young man's minority. Those with the closest interest in Patrick's future were the man who may have held his wardship and who led the political offensive against his supposed killers, Earl Patrick of Dunbar. Patrick was a distant kinsman of the Galloway family and had played a leading role in the final suppression of the Galloway revolt in 1235–6.[573] He may also have had some role as protector of the boy's interests, for the death in 1231 of his father, Thomas of Galloway, had been caused in unknown circumstances by Patrick son of Constantine of Goswick, a dependent of the Dunbars.[574] Earl Patrick, therefore, may have been seeking to avenge the death of a young man for whom he had some personal responsibility in loco parentis, and who may have been brought up under his protection.

Earl Patrick was also a close political associate of the Comyn family, the young bloods of which were most vocal and violent in

pursuing revenge against the men whom they held responsible for Patrick of Atholl's death. Comyn interest in the affair stemmed from close kinship with the murdered young man; Bower describes them as *cognati*, kinsmen or relatives.[575] The nature of that kinship is not entirely clear, but Countess Margaret of Atholl, maternal grandmother of Patrick, appears to have been a member of the Comyn family.[576] The attacks on the lands of Walter Bisset made by Alexander Comyn, heir to the earldom of Buchan, and John Comyn may well have been 'a hot-headed over-reaction by two younger members of the Comyn family to the loss of a relative of similar age', but greater political considerations may have been at stake.[577] The death earlier in 1242 of John Comyn, earl of Angus in right of his wife, had seen that earldom slip from the influence of the Comyn family; Patrick of Atholl's death had likewise snatched away a second – and more important – earldom.[578] Alexander and John Comyn's reaction, therefore, may in some way have been a response to a perceived threat to their family's dominant political position within the kingdom.

Disappointment at the loss of Atholl from their nexus does not explain the violence of their attacks on the Bissets. Mere suspicion of Bisset involvement, however, may have been all the spark that was needed to ignite already smouldering hostility between the two families, for the Comyns and their associates, and the Bissets and theirs, had acquired competing territorial interests in the preceding decade.[579] There was perhaps a significant degree of resentment on the part of the Comyns, old established members of the great nobility of the kingdom and a family who had grounded their power in close and loyal service to the crown, towards the relatively parvenu Bissets, who were significant beneficiaries of Alexander's patronage and who were likewise attracting growing influence through a record of loyal and effective royal service. Most damning in Comyn eyes, however, may have been the Bissets' close association with Alan Durward, the principal rival to the young Patrick for the earldom of Atholl, claimant to the earldom of Mar in opposition to a close Comyn associate, and rising star in King Alexander's service.[580] Following the death of Thomas of Galloway in 1231, his widow Countess Isabella had been supported as 'legitimate heiress to Atholl' by her Comyn kin, but between 1233 and 1235 it appears that Alexander had granted the earldom to Alan Durward.[581]

Durward's interest appears to have stemmed from his mother, who is believed to have been a daughter of Countess Isabella's grandfather,

Malcolm earl of Atholl, by his second marriage. In the 1230s, Alan Durward was therefore the closest adult male member of the Atholl kindred, and probably more favoured by Alexander as a safe pair of hands to control a hugely strategic earldom during a politically unstable time. For some unknown reason he lost control of Atholl during 1235, possibly due to the political ascendancy of the young Patrick's Dunbar and Comyn protectors, but the Comyns must have been genuinely fearful that in 1242 he would regain possession. Striking at the Bissets, a family aligned very closely with the Durwards, may have been an indirect attack on Alan Durward and his interests. If this were the motivation, then the support which their actions commanded suggests that there was widespread resentment at the king's promotion of the Bissets and deep hostility held by many towards the ambitious Durward.

But the belief in Bisset guilt expressed in the hostility of the assembled nobles at Perth, Forfar and Edinburgh seems to have arisen from deeper and stronger roots than mere rumour, suspicion and political rivalry. Bower's thirteenth-century St Andrews source seems to have believed that Patrick's death at the hands of members of the Bisset following arose from 'long-standing hostility between their predecessors'.[582] Some modern historians have accepted this statement *prima facie* and labelled Patrick and the Bissets as enemies and rivals.[583] The root of that enmity, it is suggested, arose from the fact that in 1242 Patrick had been 'expected to become a great lord of a certain inheritance which descended to him'.[584] The Bissets, it is argued, coveted a portion of that inheritance, their interest arising from the fact that Walter Bisset had in 1233 married the sister of Alan and Thomas of Galloway, the aunt of young Patrick.[585] The statement in the Lanercost Chronicle account of Patrick's death, that he had been warned on the day of his murder of the risk to him in a letter 'from the wife of his murderer', has been taken as corroborating this scenario. As Duncan observed, 'the inheritance was surely that of Thomas of Galloway, the lady who may have betrayed the death as murder was surely his aunt, wife of Walter Bisset'.[586] The fact that Walter subsequently acquired a portion of the former Galloway lands in Ulster from Henry III has been seen as confirmation of their ambition to secure at least part of Patrick's Galloway inheritance by whatever means necessary, but there is, in truth, no direct link. The lands in Antrim that had been held briefly by Alan and Thomas of Galloway as tenants of the English crown had been lost in 1227 when Hugh de Lacy resumed his earldom of Ulster.[587] It was only after

Hugh's death – also in 1242 – that Henry III had been able to reassert English royal interest in the earldom and find the resource there to provide Walter Bisset with a landed estate upon which to sustain himself. At the time of Patrick's murder, Walter can have had no knowledge of the imminence of Hugh's death.

The assumption that Patrick's death was linked to the Galloway inheritance of his father has been arrived at by a circular argument based on the circumstantial evidence of the statement that he was killed because of his approaching succession and that his murderer's wife – who may have been his aunt – attempted to warn him. But was 'that certain inheritance which descended to him' his paternal heritage? Of far greater significance was his possible succession to the earldom of Atholl. Here, too, it should be remembered, his inheritance would have frustrated the ambitions of other powerful men who were also his kin. Alan Durward is a possibility, for he certainly craved the social elevation which possession of an earldom bestowed, but would his wife, the illegitimate daughter of the king, have been in a position to warn Patrick? A more likely alternative is David Hastings, the husband of Patrick's maternal aunt, Forveleth; it was he who eventually received the earldom.[588] But all of this is mere speculation; in the absence of any evidence stronger than the surviving chronicle testimony we can never prove either way the innocence or guilt of the parties involved. What mattered in 1242 was that an important young heir had died in mysterious circumstances, which some believed to be suspicious. His death unleashed an outpouring of hostility towards a rapidly rising family whose closeness to the king was resented by others who saw that closeness as a threat to their long-garnered influence with Alexander. Such was their insecurity that even Alexander and Queen Marie's steadfast support and open declaration of belief in Walter Bisset's innocence was inadequate protection. For all his political, military and diplomatic achievements in extending royal lordship in the previous three decades, Alexander was unable to impose his authority over Dunbar, the Comyns and their associates in this crisis. Indeed, his ability to command the obedience of families who had been amongst the closest servants of the crown and beneficiaries of royal patronage exposed a fundamental weakness in his kingship. His response to this challenge would define the last years of his reign.

Walter Bisset and his kinsmen's quittance of the kingdom did not draw a line under the political turmoil which had followed the death

of Patrick of Atholl, but it did mark a turning point in the affair. With the Bissets gone and blame for the crime apparently clearly assigned, the unity of those who had clamoured for action against the perceived perpetrators began to dissolve. There could, however, be no straightforward return to the *status quo ante*, for close relationships that had been forged between Alexander and several of his greatest magnates and royal servants over the previous three decades had been at best severely compromised and at worst broken irreparably. Trust between the king and the Comyns in particular had come close to breakdown, but Alexander had also been given cause to wonder if the loyalty of some of his principal servants was attached more to their wider kin networks and political associates than to him. The accepted modern interpretation of the course of these events through 1242 is that it had exposed especially the ineffectiveness of the king's chief officers north of the Forth, the two justiciars of Scotia whom he had appointed in 1241 following the death of Walter II son of Alan, neither of whom had acted to impose order when the Comyns had waged private war against the Bissets. Not only had they failed to maintain the king's peace and ensure that due legal process was followed, but they also had appeared to display distinctly partisan inclinations in favour of Dunbar and his Comyn associates in the resolution of the conflict. Furthermore, Alexander's personal authority had been defied, his ability to provide good lordship had been challenged, and trust in his impartiality in the exercise of justice called into doubt. For a king who apparently had enjoyed almost thirty years of unquestioned loyalty from his leading nobles, and who had presided over a period of sustained expansion in the authority and effective reach of the Scottish crown, his sudden powerlessness in the face of those same nobles is seen as a shocking and sobering blow.[589] How shocking to Alexander the outcome in November 1242 was might be reflected in the absence of any evidence for a concerted effort to recover the initiative in the following months. Indeed, it may have been late in 1243 before Alexander was in a position to take decisive steps designed to reassert his authority.

Alexander does seem personally to have placed most blame on the two justiciars of Scotia, Philip de Melville and Robert de Mowat; or perhaps they were simply the easiest targets for his anger, given that their offices were in his gift. They were replaced, apparently by March 1244, by a single new justiciar, Alan Durward.[590] Bower, apparently drawing on his lost thirteenth-century St Andrews chronicle, is the only medieval source to offer a reason for their fall. He linked their

replacement directly with the king's displeasure at their failure to take any positive action in 1242.[591] Bower's account has given rise to the repeated assertion that it was because they had 'acted so feebly to repress a feud raised by the Comyns against the Bissets' that Alexander removed them from office,[592] and that their weakness may have been a consequence of their relative social and political insignificance. The issue, however, may have been less a matter of personal status or discharge of function and more a question of their lack of impartiality. Geoffrey Barrow long ago questioned the link between their social status and their apparent inaction, noting that they may have been comparatively minor in landholding terms but both were still of baronial rank, and that Philip de Melville's grandfather, Geoffrey de Melville, had served as a justiciar in the 1170s.[593] Indeed, both men had previous experience as sheriffs, Melville in Aberdeen and Mowat in Forfar, which suggests that neither was without significant regional influence and political connections.[594] It was those connections that may have helped to secure them their appointments in 1241, but it has also been suggested that they were the reason for their downfall three years later. Mowat, it has been commented by way of explanation for his behaviour in 1242, was 'undoubtedly an ally or dependent of the Comyns', while Melville has been said to have been under the influence of the same family.[595] If both justiciars of Scotia were associates of the Comyns and acted in accordance with their political connections or inclinations in the action against the Bissets rather than discharging their office with impartiality, then they certainly merited Alexander's wrath. Their replacement Alan Durward, however, was scarcely any less partisan a choice, having clashed directly with the Comyns since at least the 1230s.

Described as 'a man of consuming ambition' and openly hostile towards the Comyns,[596] Alan Durward may have been seen by Alexander as a perfect counterbalance to the family who had so openly defied his authority and in so doing had demonstrated the extent of their influence throughout the kingdom. Importantly, too, he had been a neighbour of the Bissets in Mar and in western Moray, and likely to have been their political associate there.[597] Although there is no contemporary evidence to confirm the suggestion, it was likely Durward in his capacity as head of one branch of the Mar comital kindred and lord of Coull, Lumphanan and Onele who led out the army of Mar to halt the Comyns' harrying of Walter Bisset's property, rather than the young earl of Mar, William, who around this time was forging his own connections with the Comyns.[598] In appointing

Durward to such a politically powerful position, therefore, Alexander was sending out a very clear message to the Comyns and their network of kinsmen and allies: they had transgressed a boundary and put family interests before their duties to the king, for which they were now to reap the consequences. While a family such as the Comyns were simply too deeply entrenched within the power structures of the realm to be wholly excluded from Alexander's council and service, their star that had been so much in the ascendant in the 1220s and 1230s was very much in decline for the remainder of Alexander's reign.[599]

If Durward's appointment was intended to begin a process for the rehabilitation of the Bissets,[600] it failed singularly to deliver any result on that score. Instead, the exiled Walter Bisset had become even more deeply alienated from his erstwhile royal patron and looked to find both a new patron and a means to revenge himself on those whom he believed had failed to give him justice, as well as those who had led the attack on him. That search had taken him straight to Henry III. While Bower claims that no chronicle records the name of the 'certain Scot' whose 'flattery, inventions, fabrications and lies' spawned fresh tension between Scotland and England in 1243,[601] contemporaries were in no doubt as to this man's identity. According to the Melrose chronicler, it was Bisset who in 1244 was the principal instigator of trouble between Alexander and Henry, stirring up the latter against his former brother-in-law.[602] It was Matthew Paris's belief that this agitation had begun immediately upon Bisset's exile from Scotland, for he had not gone on his promised pilgrimage but had come straight to Henry to pour out his grievances.[603] Not only did Bisset continue to insist on his innocence and the injustice of the sentence pronounced against him, claimed Paris, but he convinced Henry that Alexander's actions were in breach of the rights of the English king as superior lord of the Scottish king. Furthermore, in additional proof of Alexander's breaches of his duties of good faith to his lord, Bisset reported that Alexander was harbouring Geoffrey Marsh, the fugitive father of the recently executed pirate William Marsh, who had been outlawed by Henry. Alexander, Paris claimed, had increased further the tension with Henry by writing to his former brother-in-law and denying that he held in any way or sense any portion of his kingdom as a vassal of the English king.[604] This letter appears to be an invention of Paris's, although it is possible that Henry may have triggered such a response by sending some form of warning to Alexander to remember his obligations to him as his liege lord.[605] The

trend in English diplomacy at Rome since the 1210s, which had repeatedly voiced claims to lordship over the Scots, suggests that such a demand by Henry is not impossible, but no evidence exists in any other English or Scottish source that such an exchange took place. Indeed, relations between the two kings were deteriorating rapidly without the need to resort to such inflammatory letter-writing.

Further hostile actions by those who held the Bissets responsible for Patrick of Atholl's death added to the mounting tension. A particular issue was an attack launched by Patrick's half-brother Alan, a bastard son of Thomas, earl of Atholl, against property in Ireland held by Walter Bisset's brother John.[606] Alan 'son of the earl', as he is known from other sources, continued for several years his vendetta against the men whom he believed had murdered his half-brother, but he was to go on to become a respected man of power, wealth and authority in Galloway and Man in the reign of Alexander III.[607] His assault on Bisset land in the English king's lordship of Ireland, however, revealed him in his youth as an uncontrollable hot-head who was following in the footsteps of his father and uncle in pursuing a plundering career in the western seaways. John Bisset at once complained to Henry – the gist of his complaint apparently being that Alexander had failed to prevent Alan, whom he claimed was the man of the Scottish king, from harrying his lands. Since Alan's action had been an outrageous breach of Henry's peace, Henry wrote to Alexander to demand he be sent to him for justice to be done. Bower's report of these events, which may be based on the same thirteenth-century south-western Scottish source that informed the Lanercost chronicle, claims that Alexander denied any responsibility for Alan's actions. Alan was, he stated, no man of his, but a 'vagabond and foreigner' of no fixed abode who lived by mercenary service in the water-world that linked England, Ireland and Norway. Given Alan's later prominence in Galloway and in Scottish royal service, this denial of any responsibility through failure to control one of his vassals sounds unconvincing. Bower's source certainly thought so, for it saw Alan's activities and Alexander's response to them as a significant contributory factor in heightening Anglo-Scottish tensions.

John Bisset's reports of attacks on his Antrim property probably reached Henry in south-west France in late summer 1243. News of an outrage against a man who was his vassal and dependent in territory that was under his lordship, and who – more to the point – was the nephew of a man who was providing Henry with loyal and effective

service in his French war, may have served to increase the Bissets' credit in the English king's eyes. Here, it may have seemed, was incontrovertible evidence for both the failure to give justice and good lordship of which Walter had accused Alexander, and the Scottish king's inability or unwillingness to restrain his vassals. Added to Henry's mounting irritation with the man to whom he had entrusted the keeping of northern England for the duration of his campaign in France were new fears for his kingdom's security as that campaign foundered. In fact, by the time Walter Bisset had joined Henry overseas, Louis IX of France had already ended the prospect of any English success in the war and forced the English king to make a rapid and deeply humiliating retreat to the security of Bordeaux.[608] As agreements reached in summer 1244 indicate, Henry was fearful of a hostile treaty between Alexander and Louis; perhaps Henry's conscience made him mindful that the yielding of so much in return for so little in 1237 still rankled with his former brother-in-law who was, after all, now married to a kinswoman of the French king. Matthew Paris certainly believed that Alexander was in league with Henry's enemies, his view probably reflecting a rumour common in England at the time.[609] Real or imagined, rumours of hostile alliances directed against the English king were rapidly eroding the already fragile peace between the kingdoms.

With Henry already imagining conspiracies and hostile leagues against him, the Bissets needed to do little more to convince him that Alexander bore him deep ill-will and was plotting the overthrow of his kingdom. Walter had apparently served Henry well in the defence of Gascony; at Bordeaux, on 28 August 1243, the king awarded him possession at pleasure of the manor of Ludham in Norfolk, upon which to sustain himself whilst in his service.[610] This grant was later confirmed by Henry on 8 December 1246, to be held by Walter and his heirs until they should recover their lands in Scotland.[611] Walter's closeness to Henry gave him the opportunity to play on the king's fears and embellish the information or interpretation of Alexander's actions that he could give. Bisset remained with Henry on the king's return to England, and over the winter of 1243–4 and into spring 1244 he received a series of cash gifts totalling £60 for his support, followed in June by a gift of 50 merks with which to buy himself new armour, presumably for Henry's planned invasion of Scotland that summer.[612]

Various checks to Henry's personal authority in England, coupled

with a fresh eruption of conflict with Dafydd ap Llywelyn, prince of Gwynedd, following the death in March 1244 of his half-brother Gruffudd whilst attempting to escape from the Tower of London, added to the king's sense of beleaguerment.[613] Tensions between Alexander and Henry escalated rapidly into hostility; by late April instructions were being issued to English sheriffs to prevent strangers passing through their territories from going to Scotland and to arrest any who were found to be carrying weapons or letters 'of a suspicious nature', and likewise to stop anyone from Scotland from passing overseas.[614] By early summer 1244 Henry was far advanced with plans for a military expedition into Scotland and a blockade of its foreign trade. In May, the officials of the Cinque Ports were notified of his campaign plans, and letters were sent specifically ordering the gathering and crewing of warships for the forthcoming expedition.[615] According to Matthew Paris, amongst the king's preparations was a summons to Thomas of Savoy, count of Flanders and Hainault, to come to perform military service against Alexander; he arrived in England in late July with a force of sixty knights and 100 men-at-arms.[616] Henry's plans were ambitious and involved forces moving north from England and also crossing into western Scotland from Ireland.[617] Despite his great shortage of money, he went to great lengths through July and early August to gather the men and materiel for what was intended to be a major military operation: 30,000 crossbow bolts were ordered from the iron-masters of the Forest of Dean for delivery to the king's army, while the smiths of Northumberland were likewise instructed to produce more; timber was selected in the royal forest around Carlisle for the construction of siege engines; and grain was gathered throughout Yorkshire for shipment north from Scarborough, as well as a shipload of salt for preserving the meat that would feed the host.[618] All of this was to be carried to the royal army mustering at Newcastle by 1 August, or on to its advance supply base on Holy Island. From these arrangements it would seem that Henry planned to strike at the rich south-east of Alexander's kingdom and its key burghs of Berwick, Roxburgh and Edinburgh, perhaps following the route that his father had taken nearly thirty years earlier. Beyond the sparse details offered by Matthew Paris, the Chronicle of Melrose and Walter Bower of Alexander's own preparations, which speak of an attempt to secure foreign aid – a force of knights sent by his brother-in-law, the lord of Coucy, is mentioned – the summoning of his own men to provide military service, and the fortifying of unspecified border castles,[619]

little is known of the Scottish response to this gathering threat.

As Henry's host assembled at Newcastle, Alexander's was gathering at Caddonlee. There, according to Bower, who is probably paraphrasing his thirteenth-century source, Alexander took a renewed oath of fealty from 'all those of important birth'.[620] Why he did so is not explained, but it is possible that he was using the muster of his army for the defence of his realm against the unwarranted aggression of the English king as the occasion to complete his reassertion of authority after the domestic political upheavals of the previous two years. The threat of war provided an opportunity for those who had defied him to re-acknowledge his lordship and their duty of obedience to him, and for him to demonstrate his own good lordship towards them. If that were his intention it seemingly worked, for it was with the confidence of a kingdom united behind him that Alexander advanced deep into Northumberland to Ponteland only 12 kilometres north-west of Newcastle. From there, he sent envoys to Henry to open negotiations to end the confrontation without bloodshed. On 6 August, Henry issued safe-conducts for Alexander and his attendants to come to Newcastle for as many days as was necessary to reach a settlement, and for a further three days afterwards to allow him to return to his own kingdom.[621] Although Matthew Paris places the meeting at Newcastle around 15 August, instructions issued at Newcastle on 10 August for the sale of the stores of grain gathered to supply Henry's army state that peace had been already concluded between the kings.[622] In less than three days, negotiation had apparently brought to an end the tensions that had built up over the previous two years. Henry's bluster and belligerence seemed very much to be 'a chase of idle hopes and fears'.

What had been agreed at Newcastle with such apparent ease? The main business seems to have been concerned with Alexander providing Henry with assurances that he was not engaged in hostile diplomacy against him. Henry, still stinging from the humiliating failure of his immensely costly expedition to regain his lost Angevin patrimony, was clearly deeply fearful of an alliance between Alexander and Louis IX of France. Alexander was able to give easy assurances concerning such an alliance, for there is no evidence that either the Scots or the French had been seeking any formal bonds; he may have been married to a distant cousin of the French king, but that did not make the two men allies. Archbishop Walter de Grey of York and Henry's younger brother, Richard earl of Cornwall, who led the

English negotiations, must have been well aware of Henry's fantastical imaginings and were ready to reach a quick settlement.[623] Matthew Paris's report of the Newcastle settlement certainly suggests that the main thrust of the agreement was a reaffirmation of Scottish adherence to the terms agreed at York in 1237, reinforced by Alexander's promise that he would not enter into any alliance with England's enemies 'unless [Henry or his heirs] should unjustly oppress us'.[624] As argued by Archie Duncan, the conditions under which the treaty was agreed were carefully restricted in respect of what either party could expect or enforce under it, and the settlement's main purpose was to provide Henry with Alexander's promise of good behaviour. Alexander had been provided with a sharp reminder of the realities of the balance of power in the British Isles; he could enter into foreign alliances, but the consequences might be dire for his own realm. Henry and England might have been humbled in the recent wars in France, but English power was still vastly superior to that of the Scots; better to recognise that reality and give a promise that cost nothing beyond the bitter taste of uttering it.[625]

That bitterness may have been sweetened somewhat by the provision within the deal for the marriage of Alexander's heir to Henry's daughter, possibly confirming an agreement that had been reached in 1242, and by Henry's recognition that Alexander's agreement to this marriage in no way prejudiced his independent right as king of Scots to make marriages freely.[626] Alexander was here, surely, preserving in respect of his son that same power he had exercised for himself following the death of his first wife. Acknowledgement of England's greater power and the promise to enter into no hostile alliance against that kingdom unless driven to it by the unjust actions of its rulers were clear statements of Alexander's recognition of the inferiority of his power to that of Henry; they were not, however, an acceptance of subjection to Henry's personal lordship.

The arrangements made for the upholding of the Newcastle settlement are a further indication of how far from being a humbling of Alexander's kingship in the manner that Falaise had been for his father this was. Alexander gave no personal oaths to Henry. Instead, four magnates headed by his chief officer, Alan Durward, swore on his soul that they would ensure his observation of the agreement. Twenty-eight Scottish bishops, earls and magnates then swore that if Alexander broke his word they would give him no aid, following

which Alexander and all thirty-two of the oath-takers appended their seals to the document. It has been commented that this extraction of oaths to secure the treaty from the senior Scottish clergy and nobility may have been inspired by the Falaise agreement, but unlike in that treaty they gave no promise to aid the English king or take action on his behalf against Alexander, only that they would give him no aid if he entered into a hostile foreign treaty against England. They were not being bound into a personal relationship with the English king, as their ancestors had been by the terms of William's submission to Henry II. Here, perhaps, is the clearest indication of how far Scottish royal authority and the status of Scottish kingship had been enhanced by Alexander over the three decades of his reign to date. He may not have been treated as an equal by Henry, and had acknowledged him as his 'liege lord', but nor had he compromised his independence, surrendered castles and given homage as his father had done.[627] Even the recognition of Henry's status as Alexander's overlord seems to have extended only in respect of the lands of the king of Scots in England, and no further. Henry had achieved a parchment victory, but Alexander had conceded little that affected his personal authority or the independence of his kingship in any significant way.

One outcome of the negotiations may have been the reconciliation of Alexander with the Bissets and their return to his peace. The exact date of their re-admission to Alexander's peace and restoration of their properties is unknown and may have varied for different members of the family. Walter Bisset was certainly back in Scotland by January 1249, when he witnessed Alexander's charter in favour of the monks of Dunfermline, and was present on the king's Argyll campaign that July.[628] Not long before that, however, his properties in Antrim had again been attacked by Alan son of the earl, Patrick of Atholl's half-brother, which could indicate that Walter had remained in exile until 1248.[629] Given Alexander's earlier denunciation of Alan and description of him as little more than a footloose mercenary, it is perhaps more likely that Patrick's would-be avenger would have pursued Walter regardless of the status of his relationship with the king. John Bisset, the man most suspected of commission of the murder in 1242, cannot be traced with certainty in Scotland before 1258, by which date he was once more in possession of his lordship of the Aird west of Inverness.[630] Given the political influence of their associate Alan Durward by 1244, Alexander's own view of the injustice of their treatment in 1242, and the closeness to the king in which Walter certainly stood once more by July 1249, it seems likely

that their banishment had been revoked in 1244 or shortly thereafter.

As in 1237, Henry left it to others to ensure that the reconfirmed peace of 1244 worked. Three decades of tension and increasingly strident national self-awareness on either side of the frontier, however, had only been exacerbated by this most recent confrontation. While Alexander had avoided any significant compromise to his authority, his leading magnates and lesser subjects had again been made directly aware of their king's and their own inferiority before English might. As a consequence, a new air of intransigence entered into their dealings with their English neighbours, manifest in particular in the conduct of meetings intended to resolved cross-border disputes and to agree the course of the border itself. 'Test case' is perhaps too grand a term for the near-farcical process which illustrated this border-line wrangling in the most recent round of the dispute that had been rumbling on since the 1190s (see p. 123 above). Nearly half a century of intermittent joint actions had failed to resolve the issue, so there was perhaps little confidence in autumn 1245 when Scottish and English delegates gathered at Redden Burn on the border line near Carham, for the purpose of settling the boundary between Carham on the Tweed and Hadden, that any final settlement would be reached on this occasion.[631]

According to the account sent to Henry III by Hugh de Bolebec, Hugh and the knights of Northumberland had met with the Scottish delegation led by Patrick, earl of Dunbar, and David de Lindsay, justiciar of Lothian, who had been sent as Alexander's representatives. Hugh's account has an air of farce in its description of the panel of six knights elected by the English as jurors marching off in one direction along what he claimed was 'the right and ancient' march, while their Scottish counterparts headed the opposite way and refused to accept the English knights' assertion. Earl Patrick and the justiciar had then agreed with Hugh to choose another six knights from both kingdoms to sit alongside the previous twelve jurors, 'for greater security', but they simply affirmed the diametrically opposed views of the original panels. Hugh then selected twenty-four Northumberland knights to complete the task. They attempted to perambulate a march line extending from the Redden Burn to White Law 13.5 kilometres to the south, but the Scots so violently opposed this that the English delegates were forced simply to assert their claim and withdraw. Alexander and Henry may have wished an amicable resolution to such cross-border controversies, but the hard edge which half a century of

English suspicion and Scottish simmering resentment had given to national identities conspired against them.

The quick settlement reached with Henry at Newcastle is often seen as having permitted Alexander to focus his attention on one lingering issue that affected his lordship within Scotland: the divided allegiance of those west coast lords who had lands in the lordships of both the kings of Scots and of Norway. Around 1244, Norwegian saga sources inform us, Alexander sent two bishops to the court of King Hákon IV to request the return to Scottish lordship of the Hebridean islands that his predecessor Magnus Barelegs had taken in the 1090s.[632] There is no corresponding Scottish record of such a mission to Norway, and the proposition which the Norwegian accounts claim was made would have represented a significant shift in Alexander's policy for which we have no other evidence. Scottish military and naval campaigns in the 1220s had been directed towards securing control over Kintyre and the western districts of the mainland extending north from there; previous action in the islands had been largely private initiatives driven by the ambitions of Alan of Galloway or Ferchar of Ross. An approach intended to win Scottish possession of the Hebrides, therefore, would have marked a radical new departure in Scottish policy. It seems more likely, given the events of 1249, that any Scottish approach to Hákon was intended principally to consolidate Alexander's hold on the western mainland. At most, Alexander may have sought to resolve the potential for instability which the presence of the Norwegian vassal-kingdom of Man and the Isles constituted along the length of Scotland's Atlantic coast through the opportunities which existed there for men to serve two lords.

The possibility that the Scottish mission to the Norwegian court has no historical basis has never entered past discussion of this final phase of Alexander's reign. Instead, traditional historiography has accepted the saga accounts and presented this diplomatic initiative as the beginning of the final phase in the Scoto-Norwegian contest for domination of the Western Isles which had begun in the late eleventh century. That contest has been seen as originating in a supposed 'treaty' in 1098 between Magnus Barelegs and a Scottish king whom the sagas call 'Malcolm' but who is usually identified in modern discussion of the event as Edgar.[633] This treaty tradition, however, appears to date from no earlier than the 1210s or 1220s, when it is first recorded in the saga text known as *Morkinskinna*.[634] The saga-writer's aim appears to have been to give legitimacy to Norwegian

claims of lordship over the Scandinavian colonies in the west and so to reinforce Hákon IV's imperial ambitions there.[635] The appearance of this device in saga sources composed between the time a Norwegian fleet first came west in 1210 and the period of Alexander's first active intervention in Hebridean waters in 1221–2 perhaps suggests that the rulers of Norway had recognised for some time that a challenge to their attempts to establish Norwegian overlordship of the Scandinavian western colonies would come from the Scots. The war of 1230–1 had shown that such a challenge was more than just a hypothetical possibility and that both sides had the capability to wage an effective campaign in the islands.

If any approach to Hákon was in fact made, it was perhaps in recognition of the fissures in the allegiances of the lords of the western seaboard which that previous war had threatened to open, and the extensive damage which had been wrought on the lands of his leading vassals, that persuaded Alexander to seek a negotiated settlement rather than a military solution. Hákon, however, is said to have had no interest in yielding territory. Certainly, such an action would have been incompatible with his wider ambitions, not least for the potential consequences it would have had for his efforts to establish his dominion over the Faeroe Islands, Iceland and Greenland. When the first approach was spurned, the sagas tell us, the Scottish envoys offered 'to buy the lands with refined silver'. In reply, we are told, Hákon said that 'he was aware of no such urgent need of silver that he needed to sell those lands'.[636] Repeated attempts to secure a negotiated purchase of the islands are claimed to have been made by Alexander in the following years, but there is no Scottish or English record, or non-saga Norwegian source, which offers any solid support to those claims. As with the treaty by which Norwegian lordship over the Isles was supposedly conceded by the Scots in 1098, this episode of Scottish offers to buy the islands from Norway, and Hákon's steadfast refusal to negotiate, has the appearance largely of a post-event literary invention composed with an eye both to the Norwegian king's imperial dreams and to the final settlement of the issue in the 1260s.

Traditional historiography presents Alexander's interest in the areas which bounded the political core of his kingdom to the north and west as rekindling suddenly in the second half of the 1240s, following the final resolution of the diplomatic tensions with Henry III.[637] It is, however, unlikely that Alexander's interest had ever truly waned after

1222; the conflict with Norway in 1230–1, events surrounding the Galloway succession in 1234–6, a dramatic assertion of Norwegian overlordship of Man in 1237–8, and mounting disturbances throughout the Atlantic maritime region and the north and west of Ireland in the early 1240s, would have necessitated his close observation of the volatile situation and the active involvement of his leading western lords in safeguarding his interests along the Atlantic seaboard of his kingdom. If anything, his interest in this extended region shows signs of intensification in the decade following the Scoto-Norwegian war of 1230–1.

At the northern end of the zone, it was in the aftermath of the war that Alexander had been able to tighten his hold over Caithness through the insertion of Malcolm earl of Angus into the earldom. Alongside this new earl, Bishop Gilbert de Moravia or Murray, who had been appointed in succession to the murdered Bishop Adam, provided a second pillar of royal authority in the far north. Gilbert, a member of the family descended from the mid-twelfth-century Freskin lord of Duffus in Moray, had been an agent in extending effective Scottish control beyond the bounds of Ross even before the start of Alexander's reign.[638] His kinsman Hugh, grandson of Freskin, had been granted Sutherland by King William at some date before 1211, apparently with the aim of involving the already regionally influential Moray kindred in royal schemes for the tighter control of the lands beyond Ross. From his lordship of Sutherland, Hugh carved a substantial landholding for his clerical kinsman Gilbert, endowing him with Skelbo, Invershin and lands around the River Oykel towards the bounds of Ross.[639]

These lands provided Gilbert with a secure heartland and economic base from which he was to project his authority as bishop northwards after his election in 1222, but extensive though they were it would appear that they represented only a portion of the great lordship of Sutherland which had been settled on Hugh. That territory was extended further after 1231 when Strathnaver passed into Murray hands as part of the heritage settled on one of Earl Jón's heiresses. Around four years later, as Alexander was completing his settlement of the Galloway succession in the south-west of his realm, his political settlement of the far north was also completed through the elevation of Hugh's son William to the status of earl with the creation of a new earldom of Sutherland.[640] This process of consolidation of Scottish control in the northernmost regions of the mainland is poorly

documented and recoverable only in the most general of details, but from what can be established it would seem that although Alexander had ended his active personal involvement in the region in 1222, momentum had been maintained and accelerated after the Scoto-Norwegian war of 1230–1 and the subsequent murder of Earl Jón. By 1235, opportunities for the Norwegian king to seek to exercise any influence within the northernmost mainland provinces had been ended through Alexander's completion of the new edifices of regional lordship and the installation into them of men who looked directly to him as their superior lord.

That the same momentum was gathering in the west is perhaps displayed most clearly in Alexander's intervention in the affairs of the see of Argyll. There, 1236 saw the ending of a period of possible indirect Norwegian influence represented by the custodianship of the vacant see by the Bishop of the Isles, who was a suffragan of the Norwegian archbishopric of Niðaros.[641] As with Caithness and Sutherland, a progressive extension of royal power into Argyll had probably continued across the whole period from the close of the king's campaigns in 1222, but here, too, sparse surviving documentation has masked the process. Alexander's charter of 1240 to Gilleasbuig mac Gille-Chriosd of lands on the Loch Fyne coast of Cowal, and at the southern end of Loch Awe in Mid Argyll, underscores how deeply and effectively royal power had penetrated the region following the establishment of the castle at Tarbert;[642] middle-ranking west coast lords were being tied into formal relationships with the Scottish crown through parchment records and awards. It is unlikely that Alexander's relationships with the leading members of the Mhic Somhairle kindred who held territories on the Scottish mainland were not being redefined and given greater formality through similar legal mechanisms. Indeed, Donnchad mac Dubhghaill of Argyll's presence amongst the list of the Scottish barons in whose name Pope Gregory IX was informed of the 1237 Treaty of York points towards just such a close relationship; the lord of Argyll had provided his superior lord with counsel and service in the difficult negotiations by which the settlement had been reached.

A period of regional stability following the end of the Scoto-Norwegian war had allowed this slow process of integration and accommodation to advance, but a series of unrelated events in the west beginning in 1237 combined to cause Alexander anxiety over the security of his hold there. The first stimulus for Scottish concern is

likely to have been the death in May 1237 of the Manx King Óláfr II and the accession of his fourteen-year-old son, Haraldr.[643] The boy was the grandson of Ferchar, earl of Ross, and it is probable that Alexander at first considered his succession as a positive development and likely to enhance Scottish influence in the Isles. The likelihood of a continuation of the stability which Óláfr had brought to his kingdom after 1231, however, seemed quickly to evaporate in conflict in Man between rival political groups during Haraldr's absence in the Hebrides on the cruise round the northern island components of his kingdom to receive the formal recognition of his kingship from the regional chieftains. An attempted coup by his kinsman Lochland, who had been left as guardian on Man during Haraldr's absence, seems to have aimed to place the king's younger brother Guðrøðr in the kingship and threatened a reopening of the fratricidal strife which had riven the kingdom in the 1220s. Haraldr and his supporters successfully crushed the attempt, Lochland and Guðrøðr both drowning in a shipwreck as they sought to flee to Gwynedd. This first challenge, however, was followed swiftly by a second and more potent one, which would have sent shockwaves throughout the region.

In Norway, King Hákon had been waiting to receive the submission of the young heir to Man since summer 1237. After a year had passed with no sign that Haraldr was ready to pay homage to his father's overlord, Hákon took decisive action and sent two representatives to take possession of the kingdom in his name.[644] His agents, a certain Gospatric and Gillechriosd son of Muirchertach, apparently by origin Islesmen, succeeded in driving Haraldr from Man and establishing firm control over the island, defeating every effort by the young king to re-enter his kingdom and forcing him back into the Hebrides. Eventually recognising the futility of his efforts, Haraldr sailed to Norway in 1239 and formally submitted to Hákon, remaining at his court for a further two years, during which time his kingdom was apparently administered by the Norwegian king's representatives.[645] Eventually, in 1241, he was granted the kingship of Man and the Isles by Hákon, but the kingdom committed to him was carefully defined as those islands over which his father, uncle and grandfather had ruled: those territories over which the heirs of Sumarliði claimed kingship were carefully excluded from the award. Any hope that Haraldr's family bonds with one of Alexander's chief nobles might bring a closer alignment with Scottish interests had apparently been dashed in a firm and effective display of Hákon's rights as overlord.[646]

Further blows to Alexander's influence in the west appear to have followed this forceful assertion of Norwegian rights in Man and the Isles. Although he is never styled 'rex Insularum', Donnchad mac Dubhghaill may have held possession of Mull and its adjacent islands as well as his inherited mainland territories. With an active career extending back to 1175, when his name was entered with that of his father and two of his brothers in the *Liber Vitae* of the cathedral–priory at Durham,[647] Donnchad was the arch-survivor in the complex and often violent rivalry between the three main kindreds descended from Sumarliði. Throughout his ill-documented lifetime there are hints of an ever-closer alignment with Scottish interests than was typical of his kinsmen, and the few pieces of evidence concerning him which date from Alexander's reign suggest identification with royal policies.[648] As the head of the senior line of the Mhic Somhairle, kingship over those Isles which did not form part of the Guðrøðarssons' realm could be expected to have fallen to him, but it seems that his association with Alexander made him an unattractive choice for Hákon. It is perhaps because of that link that Hákon gave the kingship of the Isles in 1230 to one of Donnchad's male kinsmen, possibly a brother. After the death of that candidate the same year, the style may have been left dormant; Donnchad certainly maintained his attachment to Alexander thereafter, and appeared last in September 1237 in connection with the Treaty of York negotiations.[649] It was probably Donnchad's death sometime shortly after his presence at York and the succession of his son, Eógan, which brought an end to the stable relationship which had been maintained between the lords of Argyll and the Scottish crown for at least three decades. The exact date of Donnchad's death, however, is unknown. References to the death of a 'MacSomurli' fighting in the host of Mael Sechlainn ua Domnaill, king of Cenél Conaill, at Ballyshannon in 1247, have been interpreted by some historians as referring to Donnchad.[650] Given that he was first recorded in 1175 it is unlikely – but not impossible – that he was the MacSomurli (Mac Somhairle) who perished fighting against Mael Sechlainn's English enemies. That Donnchad's son and successor, Eógan, was in a position to make a personal grant of property on Lismore to the bishopric of Argyll in 1240,[651] however, probably indicates that his father was dead by that date.

The removal of Donnchad from the scene may to an extent have been offset by the successful filling of the vacant see of Argyll in 1239 with a new bishop who was associated closely with Alexander's interests. William, chancellor of Moray, was described as postulate of

Argyll by February 1239 when Pope Gregory IX issued a mandate to the bishops of Moray, Ross and Caithness to examine the process of his postulation and to consecrate him if they found it to be canonical.[652] That date suggests that William's candidacy had been advanced towards the end of 1238, which might provide some indication of when Donnchad had died. Consecrated and installed in 1240, he might have proven to be an active agent for Alexander in the process of binding Argyll more firmly into the political fabric of the kingdom, but he had barely been established in his see when in 1241 he was drowned.[653] At some point after that tragedy, care of the see was entrusted to Clement, bishop of Dunblane, a reformist cleric who had already demonstrated his administrative acumen in recovering his own diocese from effective insolvency, and who was associated very closely with Alexander.[654] His appointment as administrator of Argyll was probably chiefly a reflection of his acknowledged management skills, but his links with Alexander, discussed in the following chapter, suggest that the king may have been keen to ensure that oversight of the western see was vested in one of his most reliable associates. Bishop Clement seems to have taken to his task with relish, beginning a process intended to place the see of Argyll on a sound financial footing, but this intervention may have clashed with local vested interests and helped to alienate Eógan and his kinsmen. Given the paucity of documentation involving the rulers of Argyll generally before the 1250s, the absence of evidence for Eógan's engagement with Alexander's policies in the region may give a misleading impression of a souring of relations, but Eógan's subsequent actions suggest that this negative impression may reflect the reality.

A cooling of relations between Alexander and Eógan does not mean a sudden degeneration into open hostility. In the early 1240s there was no obvious alternative to a Scottish future for the lord of Argyll, as the opportunity for an expansion of his power in the Hebrides – where he had inherited claims to kingship from his grandfather – appeared to be closed off by both the rivalry of his father's cousin Ruaidhrí mac Raonaill and by Hákon of Norway's strengthening influence over the kingship of King Haraldr of Man. Hákon, too, had given no indication that Eógan could expect any favourable reception of his royal pretensions, and there is no record of any diplomatic approach by either party to the other before 1247. The events of that year, however, may have provided the spur which encouraged Eógan to make a decisive move. Two developments possibly created favourable circumstances for an attempt to break free from the

constraints of Scottish lordship. The first was the coronation of Hákon in 1247, which may have seen the issue of summonses to the vassals of the Norwegian king either to attend the ceremony, there to renew their allegiances to their now more-exalted overlord, or to come soon afterwards to renew their oaths. Such a summons was issued to Haraldr of Man, but there is no evidence that Eógan received a similar call; his decision to travel to Norway may have been stimulated by the opportunity to curry favour which a swearing of allegiance to the newly crowned king presented. The second was the above-mentioned death of 'MacSomurli' in battle in 1247. More favour is given to the identification of the man slain at Ballyshannon as Donnchad mac Dubhghaill's cousin, Ruaidhrí mac Raonaill, whose son Dubhghall arrived in Norway with Eógan in spring 1248. The deaths of first Donnchad and then Ruaidhrí, men who had both aspired to the kingship of the Isles but neither of whom seemed to have secured that title, may have been the catalyst for their ambitious sons to compete for the award of the style of king from Hákon. It was an ambition which Alexander was in no real position to counter effectively.

A further complication in the already interlocking series of problems in Argyll and the Isles was brought by Henry III's efforts to revive English influence in the Manx kingdom. His father had exercised powerful influence over Rögnvaldr Guðrøðarsson, and Henry's government during his minority had cultivated his half-brother and successor, Óláfr. Hákon's forceful intervention in the Manx succession in 1239–41, a time when Henry was incapable of making any counter-move, had ended that brief phase of English domination. Whilst Haraldr was said by the Manx chronicler to have enjoyed 'the firmest peace with the king of England and the king of Scotland, and was allied with them in friendship' following his return from Norway in 1242,[655] there was also no question that he held his kingdom other than as the Norwegian king's vassal. It should perhaps be no surprise, therefore, that when early in 1246 Haraldr visited Henry's court and received knighthood at his hands, as his father had done before him during the previous peak of English influence in Man,[656] a highly symbolic act which pointed towards something more than just personal friendship between the men, Hákon responded decisively.

According to chronicle and saga sources, Hákon took the diplomatic offensive in 1247 with the aim of consolidating Norwegian lordship over the Isles. A summons was sent to King Haraldr,

instructing him to come to Norway to attend Hákon's impending coronation, and in autumn 1247 he headed east, passing through England rather than sailing via Orkney.[657] During the winter spent at Hákon's court in Oslo, Haraldr requested the Norwegian king's widowed daughter Cecilia as his bride and received Hákon's assent. It was a highly prestigious match and a sign of the special favour in which he stood with his overlord, or at least which Hákon was prepared to show him in a bid to secure his loyalty in the three-cornered power play for control of the Isles; as son-in-law of his overlord, the Manx chronicler saw him as having reached a degree of kingly elevation which none of his predecessors had enjoyed.[658]

The chronicler's somewhat self-satisfied reporting of Harald's success, however, must be set alongside saga references to the coming to Norway in spring 1248 of Eógan mac Donnchad and Dubhgall mac Ruaidhrí. They were rivals for kingship over the island regions which had been excluded from Haraldr's dominions in 1241, and both were seeking the award of that kingship from Hákon. It has been argued that their presence was in response to a summons to come and give their homage to the newly crowned and anointed Norwegian king,[659] but while this does appear to have been expected of Haraldr, the saga makes no mention of such a call to the Mhic Somhairle; nor does it explain the presence of the Mhic Dubhghaill and Mhic Ruaidhrí heads, but not the Mhic Domhnaill. Although the Mhic Domhnaill were the most junior of the Mhic Somhairle kindred and did not claim the kingship, they did hold a major island domain which fell within Hákon's lordship. Shortly after Haraldr's marriage to Cecilia at Bergen, Hákon granted the title of king to Eógan, probably in recognition of the seniority of his line, but when in late September the newly-weds sailed from Bergen, both Eógan and Dubgall remained in Norway. It proved to be an auspicious decision on their parts, for the royal ship foundered off Sumburgh Head at the southern end of mainland Shetland, with the loss of all aboard.[660] Not only had the Manx lost a popular and capable ruler along with many of his leading nobles and councillors, including the newly consecrated bishop of the Isles, but Hákon had lost the man whom he had identified as his loyal agent in the west.

News of the drowning of Haraldr and all his company does not seem to have reached Man until spring 1249. Haraldr's successor in the Manx kingship was his younger brother Rögnvaldr, a man with whom Hákon had had no dealings. He was acclaimed on 6 May, but

less than four weeks later he was slain at Rushen by a knight identified only as Ívarr and his men.[661] The circumstances surrounding his killing are unknown, but as his successor was Haraldr, son of Guðrøðr Dond, it seems that the old feud between the rival lines descended from King Guðrøðr II Óláfsson was again operative. As king, Haraldr Guðrøðarsson moved swiftly to expel his predecessors' chief supporters and reinstate the loyal followers of his own kindred who had suffered exile and forfeiture for their faithfulness to his family.[662] In the meantime, however, on receiving news of the deaths of his daughter and son-in-law, Hákon moved swiftly to assert his lordship and ordered Eógan to sail west from Bergen to take up the kingship of the Isles until such time as he had reached a final decision on the future government of the kingdom.[663] Eógan was certainly acting on Hákon's commission as a place-holder to ensure stability in the Isles, but he was hardly an unenthusiastic or disinterested recipient of the king's mandate. Certainly, from 1250 he appears to have involved himself in the internal affairs of Man in a manner which suggests that he was pursuing a distinctly self-interested agenda.[664] From Alexander's perspective, Eógan was entering into an overtly feudal relationship with a foreign power – a relationship which potentially compromised his pre-existing bonds with the Scottish king – and displaying ambitions to extend his own powers as a king in the Isles that were incompatible with Alexander's vision of proper power relationships in the maritime west of his realm. Regardless of whether Eógan had travelled to Norway in response to a summons from the Norwegian king or had gone there independently in pursuit of the royal title, his submission to Hákon and acceptance of his commission made a clash with Alexander inevitable.

It is unlikely that the political developments which had been unfolding in the west had not already persuaded Alexander that direct intervention was probably the only way to achieve stability on the Atlantic margins of his realm. In mid-February 1249, he was with a major gathering of his chief councillors at Stirling.[665] Amongst those present were Alexander Comyn, earl of Buchan, William, earl of Mar, and Clement, bishop of Dunblane, and it is unlikely, with Clement there, that Argyll had not been on their agenda. Given the speed with which Alexander was able to gather ships and men and move into the waters off Argyll the following summer, it must have been either at that gathering or shortly thereafter – probably when news of the drowning of King Haraldr had been confirmed – that plans for a military and naval campaign were discussed. According to saga

accounts, however, Alexander only changed his policy towards the Hebrides in summer 1249. Abandoning his efforts to secure lordship over the Isles through their purchase from Norway, he opted instead for a military solution and began to gather an army.[666]

The reason for this change is linked implicitly in the saga to the news that Eógan had been appointed by Hákon as his vassal-king over Man and the Isles, for Alexander summoned him to a meeting on his return from Norway. Eógan was no naïf and must have been well aware of the consequences of his new-found relationship with Norway, for he agreed only to meet Alexander after receiving the oaths of four Scottish earls that he could come and go in peace. According to the saga, at their meeting Alexander demanded that Eógan surrender into his hands the castle of 'Biarnaborg' (probably Cairnaburgh in the Treshnish Islands) and three other castles which he held of Hákon, together with all of the territory which Hákon had assigned into his care. In return, it is said, Alexander promised him 'a much larger dominion in Scotland' and his friendship.[667] Despite the pressure from Alexander and his councillors, Eógan was said to have been unwavering in his loyalty to his new overlord, justifying Hákon's trust in him, and departed having refused all offers made to him. It is a very positive portrayal of Eógan and his keeping of faith with Hákon, but it is hardly an impartial account, for no mention is made of the obligations that Eógan owed to Alexander as his lord for Argyll. Indeed, any direct reference to the scale of this alternative claim to Eógan's loyalties is casually omitted from the saga narrative. This saga account represents a continuation of the earlier reports of Alexander's attempts to buy the Isles throughout the 1240s, and is part of Norwegian royal efforts to validate its own claimed rights of overlordship in the Hebrides and to present Alexander's behaviour as the unjust and unprovoked response of a frustrated bully whose sustained efforts to gain control of the islands had come to naught.

Contrary to the saga tradition, Alexander had no obvious cause to shift the main focus of his personal attention westwards until around 1247. Despite the setback which the drowning of Bishop William in 1241 may have represented, the placing of the see of Argyll in the hands of the reliable Bishop Clement of Dunblane appeared to maintain the momentum behind the fuller integration of the region into the Scottish kingdom that had been under way for a quarter of a century. Although there is little surviving evidence for Clement's active involvement in the affairs of the Church of Argyll, what

evidence there is suggests that he progressed slowly with a reorganisation which may have been focused principally on securing the finances of what was recognised as an impoverished diocese. There is no suggestion of resistance to his efforts locally, and certainly nothing that required him to call on Alexander for aid in enforcing any reform scheme. Rather than Argyll, it was probably Galloway which was the most immediate cause of a westward shift in Alexander's gaze: renewed disturbances in the south-west had followed the death in 1246 without direct heirs of one of the three heiresses between whom the lordship had been divided.[668]

A reported rising in western Galloway against Roger de Quincy – husband of the senior surviving heiress – while serious, does not appear to have been on the scale of the protracted upheavals of 1235–6 and was put down relatively easily in 1247 with Alexander's aid.[669] It does, however, appear to have provided Alexander with the opportunity to begin the tighter integration of the south-western mainland into the political–administrative system of the kingdom; it was probably in the aftermath of the suppression of the rising that the sheriffdom of Dumfries was extended westwards as far as the River Cree and an altogether new sheriffdom of Wigtown was created west of that river.[670] There is no surviving Scottish-based chronicle reference to this incident; it is reported only by Matthew Paris, whose quite lengthy narrative contains little detail of who the rebels were, where the locus of their actions was, or the actual process of suppression. Given the external support for the 1235–6 rebellion and the temporary refuge which its leading figures had found in the maritime zone beyond Galloway, it is possible that Alexander was reawakened to the threat to the stability of his kingdom which the presence of a potentially hostile power in that region could represent. The unfortunate coincidence with the renewed disturbances in Galloway of, first, Haraldr's receiving knighthood from Henry III so soon after the 1244 Anglo-Scottish crisis, followed by his departure for Norway to pay court, may, then, have been a major factor behind a new focus on the western seas.

The saga account of Eógan of Argyll's negotiations with Alexander in the early summer of 1249 presents us with an image of an honourable man confronted with an impossible and unnecessary choice by one of his two overlords. In Norwegian eyes, which had already witnessed the advance of Scottish power in Sutherland and Caithness, and seen the insertion of a Scottish nobleman into the

Norwegian earldom of Orkney, Alexander's intention was obvious: he was manufacturing an excuse to legitimate a war of conquest against Eógan and, by extension, the kingdom which he had received from the hands of King Hákon. Matthew Paris was equally convinced of Alexander's naked ambition and unjustifiable hostility against a blameless man who had attempted to serve both his lords, as honour demanded. Alexander, he said, had reigned 'for many years with justice, successfully and in peace' but had been swayed by greed and 'swerved from the path of justice'.[671] Misunderstanding the reasons for Alexander's action against Eógan, whom he believed had only renewed the homage which his father had formerly given to the Norwegian king for a single island 'situated between Orkney and Scotland', Paris presented Alexander as acting oppressively and without justification. His account of affairs tallies with that of the saga insofar as he believed that Eógan had attempted to reach a negotiated settlement with Alexander and that the attempt foundered on the intransigence of the Scottish king, who would not even permit him a time of truce in order to travel to Norway and resign his island territories, thereby withdrawing his homage from Hákon. That Paris had access to some source of detailed information concerning the events of summer 1249 and their background is suggested by his reference to Alexander's behaviour in pursuing Eógan as being encouraged by 'a certain indiscreet bishop of Strathearn' who was drawn from the Dominican order. That 'indiscreet bishop' was none other than Clement, bishop of Dunblane (the see of Strathearn), into whose hands Alexander had entrusted the administration of the bishopric of Argyll. Late in 1248 Clement and his colleague, Alexander's chancellor William de Bondington, bishop of Glasgow, had been mandated by the pope to arrange for an election to the vacant see and, early in 1249, papal approval was also given to a Scottish proposal to move the seat of the bishopric from its location on the island of Lismore to a mainland site.[672] Whatever else Paris may have misunderstood or misrepresented, he was probably correct in seeing ecclesiastical politics as a contributory factor in the collision between Alexander and Eógan.

Some caution, however, should be exercised in the interpretation of Paris's narrative, for his account was written retrospectively in the knowledge of the conflicts of loyalty and obligation which unfolded in Anglo-Scottish relations during the minority of the child-king Alexander III. It is likely that Eógan's declaration to Alexander II that he could discharge in full the service which he was due to perform

both to him and to Hákon, and its dismissal with the retort that no-one could serve two masters, is an invented device of Paris's that aimed both to introduce a moral dilemma into his narrative and to throw into stark contrast the behaviour of sections of the Scottish nobility in the coming years. Given that the English chronicler knew well that several of Alexander's magnates already served two masters, in that they were vassals of both him and Henry III, Paris was highlighting the dishonesty of Alexander's stance in respect of Argyll while signalling also the presence of a worm at the heart of Anglo-Scottish relations. Eógan's counter-retort, that he could easily serve two masters provided they were not enemies, displays a firmly forward-looking gaze on Paris's part.[673]

In early summer 1249, Alexander may have cared little about what the Norwegian king would have thought of the practicalities of dual allegiances; his immediate dispute was with one of his own vassals, whose behaviour through the 1240s had apparently run contrary to the king's wishes. It was the view of the Melrose chronicler that Alexander's objective was 'to pacify' Argyll;[674] acquisition of the Hebrides by hostile or any other means was mentioned nowhere in the Melrose account, nor indeed in that of Matthew Paris. But the 'pacification' of Argyll could not be achieved without dealing with its lord and depriving him of the haven which his domain within the island regions over which Hákon had so recently and effectively asserted Norwegian lordship afforded him. It was certainly the belief of the Manx chronicler, writing from the future perspective of an islander who had witnessed the application of increasing levels of pressure from the Scots, that Alexander's main aim was to reduce the kingdom of all the islands to subjection.[675] The gathering of the fleet which was to convey Alexander and his army to the Argyll coast would certainly have caused general alarm in the islands; he had already demonstrated in 1221–2 the effectiveness of his naval power in the west, and now he also commanded the naval resources of Galloway. That the fleet did not assemble in the Solway region, however, suggests that, unlike Alan of Galloway, Alexander's immediate objective was not a conquest of Man. Although no details of the muster and the movement of the Scottish force survives before the record of its arrival off the Lorn coast, it is likely that the royal castle at Tarbert, on the narrow isthmus between the waters of the Firth of Clyde and the Hebrides, was the springboard.[676] From there Alexander pushed north, with his objective clearly being the heartland of Eógan's power in Lorn, centred on the Mhic Dubhghaill stronghold

at Dunstaffnage. Eógan, who would have known the likely consequences of his failure to reach agreement with Alexander, had not waited for the royal juggernaut to hove into view; according to some versions of the saga account, he had withdrawn into this islands and taken up residence in the northern centre of the kingdom of Man and the Isles in Lewis.[677] Around the end of the first week of July, Alexander's fleet reached the Sound of Kerrera, the channel leading south from Oban Bay.

Beyond the obvious fact that the Scottish fleet was anchored barely 10 kilometres from Dunstaffnage, we have no evidence for what Alexander planned to do after 'pacifying' Argyll. The sheltered waters of Oban Bay may have been intended as an assembly point from which to strike west into the islands, at least towards the ancestral core of Mhic Dubhghaill insular territory in Lismore, Mull, Coll and Tiree. Then again, having driven out Eógan he may have been content to consolidate his grip on mainland Argyll before contemplating anything more ambitious in Atlantic waters. His plans, however, remain the subject of historical speculation, for the campaign progressed no further. As early as Lent 1248 there are hints that Alexander's health had begun to deteriorate: special dispensation was given by Pope Innocent IV in respect of the king's observance of Lenten diet and fasting, arising from advice given by Alexander's confessor and physician.[678] The implication in the Chronicle of Melrose is that his health had broken down during the voyage to Kerrera, and that he was already seriously ill by the time that he reached that island. While Matthew Paris has Alexander struck down by a mortal illness almost at the moment he set foot on the territory of the man he had treated so dishonourably, all other accounts suggest that he lingered for some days or hours, visited in his fevered dreams by the outraged saintly protectors of the islands and of Norway, St Columba, St Magnus and St Olaf.[679] On 8 July, as he lay on his deathbed on Kerrera, attended by his son-in-law Alan Durward, Walter Bisset, his kinsman William de Brechin, David Lindsay (justiciar of Lothian), Robert de Meyners, Walter Murray, Alexander the Steward, and that 'indiscreet bishop' Clement of Dunblane, he issued a charter granting the nearby church of Kilbride in Lorn to the bishopric of Argyll.[680] Although it has been suggested that this grant represented an act of policy and may have been intended to provide a see for the bishopric located on the Scottish mainland rather than on the questionably Scottish island of Lismore,[681] it is more likely to have been simply the act of a dying man seeking to soothe and speed the

passing of his soul heavenwards. Before the end of that day, just weeks before his fifty-first birthday, Alexander died.

SEVEN

The Church, the King and the King's Faith

In the preceding chapters, religious matters have been woven through the largely political narrative but have still remained mostly background or incidental detail in the main flow of events. In this chapter, religion in general moves to the forefront, permitting a series of major trends in ecclesiastical matters that affected Alexander and his realm directly to be considered in detail. First, it will examine the high political dealings with the papacy which so influenced the early years of Alexander's reign, and in particular the role of the papal legates in England in the conduct of the war of 1215–17 and the treaty negotiations which followed. The next theme to be explored is Alexander's influence in the appointment of bishops in the Scottish Church, and especially his uses of the episcopate as agents to extend his political influence into territories where direct royal influence was limited. Alongside this aspect, the discussion will consider the manner in which nomination to bishoprics was also used as a reward for senior royal clerks, balanced with examination of Alexander's role in the appointment and support of reforming clerics in dioceses where ecclesiastical structures or the quality of spiritual life were underdeveloped. Finally, the discussion will move to Alexander's personal faith and religious behaviour, exploring what can be reconstructed of his religious patronage and assessing what that can tell us about the beliefs which drove him and the underlying matters of conscience which coloured his pious acts.

Alexander, the Pope and Papal Legates

Despite the favour that had been shown to the Scottish Church in 1192 when Pope Celestine III had issued the bull *Cum universi*, which established all of the mainland dioceses with the exception of Whithorn as 'special daughters' of Rome, unequivocal future papal support for Scotland in all things could not be taken for granted. Under Pope Innocent III, as the spiritual authority and political power of the papacy approached its peak, papal diplomacy found its freedom to manoeuvre, if anything, reduced, as it had to balance the aspirations of often competing demands from various secular powers. For the Scots, there had to be recognition that whatever rights Celestine had extended to them by *Cum universi* they were contingent on the greater needs of his successors to discharge their duties as

spiritual fathers of all of western Christendom and, as political leaders, to maximise the potential advantage to papal authority as opportunity arose. Thus it was that Alexander found the favour that had been shown to his father and kingdom was withdrawn when his involvement in the rebellion of the English barons in 1215 brought him into collision with Innocent III's policies in England. Since 1213, John had been a direct vassal of the pope, having surrendered his kingdom to Innocent and received it back as a papal fief as a device to give him added protection and support against his domestic opponents and foreign enemies.[682] Regardless of the legitimacy of Alexander's complaints against John, his entry into the English civil conflict as an enemy of Innocent's vassal exposed him to the same threats of spiritual penalty which were being brought to bear on John's rebel vassals. For the teenage king, fit, healthy and sure of the legitimacy of his claims, threats of excommunication and the consequent risk to his mortal soul should he die whilst under interdict might have seemed gambles worth taking. For many in his kingdom, however, the withdrawal of papal favour probably, at the least, raised terrible spectres of a revival of English claims to metropolitan jurisdiction over the Scottish Church, but also, for some of the more grizzled veterans amongst Alexander's advisors, the horrifying prospect of unconfessed death without even the comfort of burial in consecrated ground.

Alexander, as discussed earlier, may have hoped for a quick victory, which would have permitted him to make his peace with the pope from a position of strength. That hope, however, was dashed in 1216 when Guala Bicchieri was sent as papal legate to England to reinforce John's authority; he arrived in England on 20 May, the day before the Dauphin Louis landed in Kent at the invitation of the rebel English barons. The full consequences of Alexander's actions in joining the rebels and continuing to prosecute the war even after John's death was made clearer in 1217 when the new pope Honorius III extended Guala's commission and empowered him to take action against the young Henry III's opponents in Scotland and Wales as well as England.[683]

Of gravest concern to Alexander was Honorius's letter to his legate of 17 January 1217, which granted him the powers of interdiction, excommunication and degrading of senior clerics and 'others' whose actions seemed to Guala to merit that punishment.[684] In addition, he was given the authority to appoint 'persons faithful to [Henry III] . . . to vacant cathedrals, churches and exempt and royal abbeys'. In effect,

he had been given the ability to depose prelates who opposed papal policy and supported the rebels and enemies of the young English king, and to replace them with men of proven reliability. The wording of the letter is unequivocal: while Guala's first steps were against the rebels and their clerical abettors in England, the threats extended to Alexander's realm as well as over England. That fact was not lost on Alexander's spiritual advisors and councillors amongst the clergy, as the Melrose chronicler's bitter denunciation of the legate's seemingly unprecedented powers reveals.[685] Faced with a choice between supporting their king and facing extreme spiritual penalties and possible loss of office, or aligning themselves with those supporting first John then his son, two of Alexander's senior bishops, who had been absent from the kingdom attending the Lateran Council in Rome at the time the crisis had erupted, chose to avoid any risk by remaining abroad. Bishop Walter of Glasgow did not return to Scotland until 1217, while Bishop William Malveisin of St Andrews remained overseas until January 1218.[686]

Nine days after his arrival in England, Guala pronounced a fresh bann of excommunication and interdict against the Dauphin and his English supporters. In November 1216, this was extended to included Alexander and the Scottish magnates, and then extended further to include all prelates in his allegiance.[687] The sentence against Alexander had possibly been prepared at Bristol on 11 November, a fortnight after Henry III's coronation, but it might not have been executed in the hope that the threat of its implementation would be sufficient to secure Alexander's submission.[688] Certainly, there is no sign that Honorius III thought that any excommunication and interdict against Alexander was in place before 17 January 1217, when he castigated the Scottish king for his lack of respect for papal authority, also insisting on his submission to the young King Henry.[689] Honorius, it seems, still hoped to avoid extreme spiritual measures: he held out the promise that, in return for Alexander's submission, he would use his influence with the English king to aid Alexander to recover his (unspecified) rights. Even this direct approach from Honorius left Alexander unmoved, and papal letters show that by early July 1217 Alexander had been excommunicated for his failure to acknowledge Henry's lordship and enter his peace.[690] No formal sentence may have been pronounced and broadcast over the summer, the Chronicle of Melrose claiming that publication of Alexander's excommunication and the interdict on Scotland occurred only in September 1217, after the submission of Louis and the English rebels to Henry.[691] This act

against Alexander, however, was presumably an explicit restatement of the sentence against those in Scotland who maintained their defiance of Honorius III and Henry III following the formal absolution of Henry's opponents in England.

Further resistance was futile; Alexander and his kingdom stood alone in the face of the full blast of papal ire and had to accept the consequences. Negotiations for submission moved swiftly, but during that time Alexander and Scotland lived under interdict and suffered the full implications of that status. For Alexander, the costs of his actions in pursuing his ambitions in England in defiance of the pope and his legate in terms of the jeopardised souls of those of his subjects who died during this period would have been a stain on his conscience and, together with a continuing endeavour to rebuild his standing in divine favour, this probably explains much of his later quest to find the most effective spiritual intercessors amongst the Orders of monks and friars. After two months, Guala's delegates – the archbishop of York and the bishop of Durham – absolved Alexander and his mother at Berwick, followed by the lay magnates.[692] Having dealt with the king, Guala then proceeded to take action against those amongst the Scottish clergy who had defied the interdict and continued to minister to their royal master. Again for Alexander the costs of his ambitions and the loyalty his clergy had given him were laid bare, for he was obliged to admit the legate's representatives to Scotland to receive the clergy's submissions before releasing them from excommunication, which was obtained after the performance of humble penance and the payment of heavy fines.[693] His most senior clerical advisors, clerical members of his own household, all of his bishops and those beneficed clergy who had participated directly or indirectly in the past conflict were required to seek Guala's personal absolution. Alexander was powerless to intervene as Guala dispensed justice on the clergy who had provided Alexander with counsel and spiritual advice, and who had served in his government; even the king's pleas could shield neither his chancellor, William del Bois, nor his clerk, Robert of St Germain, from suspension from their offices and benefices until Pope Honorius himself had absolved them.[694]

Even greater penalties were imposed on the Cistercian monks who, despite the explicit inclusion of even exempt and royal abbeys within the scope of Guala's legatine powers, had defied the interdict and continued to celebrate divine services in their churches.[695] As the outraged tones of the Melrose chronicler indicate, the Cistercians

believed themselves to be exempt under the general privileges that had been conceded to their Order by past popes, but outrage alone could not change the reality of their situation.[696] Cowed into submission, a group of abbots sought and received personal absolution,[697] but the Cistercian communities eventually received their absolution from Bishop Malveisin, who was acting on Guala's authority. While the severity of the action against the Order had been brought about by their defiance of the legate's power and authority, it had been the Cistercians' support for Alexander throughout the war which had most earned them the legate's hostility. Thus, for Alexander, the Order associated most closely with his family, and which had been consistent in its support for him and his rights, was being the most penalised for that association. This was presumably one reason for his future diversion of so much of his patronage towards the Cistercians.

However severe the spiritual penalties in 1217–18, Honorius III had no intention of reversing the favour which his predecessors had shown to Alexander's father and to the Scots. Just as Innocent III's chief concern had been to lend aid to a papal vassal against his domestic and foreign enemies, so with Honorius it was with securing the succession of John's son and preserving his inheritance against all men. The papal legates Guala and, later, Pandulf were the agents through whom that consistent policy was executed and, while their fulfilment of their duties involved them necessarily in actions that were clearly hostile to current Scottish ambitions, they were not designed specifically to be anti-Scottish. Alexander had sought to capitalise on the crisis in England and, in defiance of papal pronouncements and threats, had pursued ambitions that were directly contrary to papal wishes. The legates, therefore, had little option in the discharge of their responsibilities to both the pope and the young Henry III to take whatever steps were necessary to safeguard the heritage of the English king. In the crisis years of 1216–17, Guala fulfilled his duties with drive and energy but, as has also been observed, with an arbitrariness sharpened even more by personal vindictiveness.[698] Although his policies had Henry III's interests foremost, that did not prevent him from pushing home any advantage beyond what was necessary to secure his immediate aims. Indeed, later generations of Scottish chroniclers were to accuse the papal legate Guala of becoming too English in his acts and pursuing policies that went beyond the authority of his legatine commission in the advantage which he sought to give to the English king over

Scotland.[699]

There is some justice in that view, for Guala's interdict and its lifting were apparently linked to the extraction of an oath by Alexander and his magnates at Edinburgh that they would accept the judgement of the church and the pope's mandates.[700] Although it is not stated explicitly, it is likely that those judgements and mandates concerned Alexander's claims under past Anglo-Scottish treaties; given the partisan support which the papacy had given to the English crown since 1213, it must have seemed inevitable to the Scots in whose favour judgement would be delivered. Despite the personal humiliation that Alexander and his leading councillors suffered at the hands of Guala and his representatives, however, Honorius had no intention of inflicting unnecessary punishment once the immediate objective had been achieved. The clearest indication of that came on 21 November 1218 when he reissued the bull *Cum universi*, which confirmed the independence of the Scottish church from English metropolitan supremacy.[701] This reissue, known as *Filia specialis*, emphasised to the Scots that Honorius recognised the special relationship between Rome and the Scottish church and people, despite the tension of recent years. It also emphasised, however, that such a relationship was still subordinate to the pope's wider responsibilities to the Church Universal and to those who had placed themselves under his direct lordship as vassals; in his support for John and Henry III, the pope was not being anti-Scottish but simply discharging his responsibilities as the English kings' superior lord.

The balancing act which Honorius was attempting to maintain in his dealings with the major political powers within Britain took a different turn in the legatine commission which he issued to Pandulf Masca, Guala's successor. Having secured the uncontested position of Henry III as king of England and a peace – at least on parchment – that would enable him to achieve his majority with no threat to his patrimony, the pope could adjust his stance to become more accommodating to Alexander. The first sign of this shift is visible in the terms of Pandulf's legation; this was for England only, and extension to matters affecting Scotland were dealt with by specific mandates.[702] The first such mandate dealt with the question of the Anglo-Scottish treaties of 1209 and 1212, which had provided so much of the impetus behind Alexander's entry into the English civil war. Bearing in mind the oath that the Melrose Chronicle reports was extracted from Alexander and his nobles at Edinburgh early in 1218,

Honorius's delegation to Pandulf of judgement in the matter of the treaties with power to confirm or annul them[703] appears to have been a central plank in his policies within Britain. That Honorius and Pandulf fully understood the centrality of these treaties, and the unfulfilled components of them, is evident in the efforts made by Pandulf to secure a solution which recognised Alexander's rights without compromising the interests of Henry. The further future failures of Henry to meet in full his obligations under the settlement reached at York in July 1220 should not obscure the fact that the treaty represented a sincere attempt by the legate to secure a lasting peace that satisfied all parties. Alexander's compliance may have been forced by the terms of his submission to Guala and acceptance of papal judgement and mandates, but it also signalled his recognition that papal influence within England was such that fulfilment of Henry's obligations might actually be delivered. This direct involvement in the treaty negotiations apart, Pandulf's role in Scottish matters was considerably more circumscribed than Guala's and marked a steady withdrawal to a position closer to that which had been conceded to the Scots under the provisions of *Cum universi*. Indeed, further papal instructions to Pandulf concerning cases appealed to Rome and being returned for settlement by judges-delegate demonstrates a particular sensitivity to Scottish opinion and his desire to avoid transgressing the concessions he had made to Alexander and the Scottish church through his 1218 reissue of that earlier bull.[704]

Honorius's limits on his legate's authority and Pandulf's careful exercise of his commission combined to restore Scoto-papal relations to the good position that had been established across most of the second half of the reign of Alexander's father. When the next legate to hold a commission specifically for Scotland, possibly sent at Alexander's request and certainly with his express consent, arrived late in 1220 or in early 1221, there was no *prima facie* intention that he should deal with anything other than ecclesiastical business.[705] Alexander could hardly have been uninterested in the activities of Master James the papal penitentiary, for many of the cases on which he was asked to pass judgement involved some of his leading prelates and magnates. There is, however, no evidence that he involved himself directly in the legate's official activities. This distancing may have been because of the almost entirely spiritual or disciplinary nature of the business brought before Master James, but it may also have been an aspect of policy on Alexander's part to present himself as

a loyal and obedient son of the Church and, as his oath to Guala's delegates had committed him, readily compliant with the pope's judgements and mandates. His motivation from the outset may have been to win Master James's confidence and, through that, the legate's support for an audacious request: that James bestow on him a full coronation. Unwilling to commit himself to an act which he believed to be beyond his authority, James wrote to Honorius for guidance and received in return a stern rebuke prohibiting him from doing so without first securing the consent of the English king and his counsellors, as Alexander was said to be Henry's vassal for his kingdom.[706] It is not known if James reported Honorius's response in exactly those terms, but Alexander for the time being dropped his efforts to secure the coronation ritual for which he so longed.

There seems to have been no significant consequences of Alexander's attempted manipulation of Master James's legation, for it was shortly afterwards, in 1225, that Honorius issued a mandate authorising the holding of a provincial council of the Scottish church.[707] The pope may have been unwilling as yet to support Alexander's pretensions to a higher order of kingship, but he was encouraging the Scottish Church to provide itself with the mechanisms that would underpin its independent status against any future English claims. Alexander, of course, had won considerable approval at Rome for his harsh reprisals for the murder of Bishop Adam of Caithness in 1222,[708] the bishop having been killed by disgruntled members of his flock partly on account of his attempts to introduce papal policy on teind payments. It was in this period, too, that the pope responded favourably to a number of petitions from Alexander concerning the foundation and endowment of new monastic institutions. Alexander was clearly seeking to dispel any lingering taint from his excommunication and the interdict under which his kingdom had languished, and to curry favour with the papacy, which might see future requests for a greater prize answered more positively.

When next the papacy became involved in Anglo-Scottish relations, it was apparent that Alexander's endeavours had been in vain. As tensions between Alexander and his brother-in-law increased in the 1230s over what the Scots perceived as his failure to fulfil his obligations under the 1220 treaty, Henry used his good standing as a loyal papal vassal to enlist the aid of Pope Gregory IX in applying pressure on Alexander to renegotiate the treaty terms. No matter how much Alexander demonstrated his virtues as a Christian king and

advanced religion within his kingdom, the influence of the English king and the value of his support to the papacy far outweighed anything that he could do. Alexander, however, may already have inflicted some damage on his relationship with the papacy when, in 1229, he appears to have resisted a planned visit to Scotland by Stephen of Anagni, a papal nuncio and collector in England, Scotland and Ireland of the tax of one tenth of clerical incomes that Gregory was levying.[709] It is likely that Gregory's letters to Alexander urging him to make peace with Henry and reminding him of his duties to his English overlord had the opposite result to the one intended by the pope (see pp. 137–8, 139 above). Thus, when Gregory in 1237, at the request of Henry III, issued a legatine commission to Otto, cardinal–deacon of St Nicholas, initially to help Henry deal with his domestic political problems but swiftly extended first to securing a negotiated peace between Henry and Alexander and then into a full mission to Scotland as well as England, Alexander's response was distinctly hostile.[710] It was not simply that Otto's legation had not been requested by the Scots, but more the fact that it had been added to a legation intended originally to deal with English matters. Pope Gregory's letter to Alexander announcing the extension of Otto's mandate attempted to justify it by stating that, since Scotland recognised the Church of Rome as its sole metropolitan, it was only fitting that a legate sent at that time should visit both kingdoms. Otto's negotiation of the terms of what became the 1237 Treaty of York probably added to Alexander's sense of disgruntlement, for he was clearly more favourable to Henry than Alexander. This handling of the York negotiations, coupled with the worrying linkage of a legatine commission to England with one to Scotland, probably explains Alexander's reported resistance to Otto's attempts to visit his kingdom.[711]

That it was the linking of a Scottish to an English legatine commission that most alarmed Alexander becomes clear in the reports of Otto's mission in Scotland in 1239, and in the king's subsequent response to proposed legations from Rome. Although Matthew Paris, our most detailed source for the events of Otto's time in England and Scotland, is highly suspect in terms of the colourful tales that he narrates of the greed of the legate and his companions, and of Alexander's efforts to deter the legate from visiting Scotland, his story appears to contain a kernel of truth. His account of Alexander requiring Otto, as a condition of entry to Scotland, to enter into a legal agreement which stated that his visitation under a joint legation to

both kingdoms would not form a precedent is consistent with the king's determination to ensure that the privileges of his kingdom were not eroded.[712] Certainly, there was much to fear from the possibility that a future English holder of a legatine commission might also seek an extension of that commission to Scotland in the manner of Otto, thus jeopardising the independence of the Scottish church.[713] Indeed, Pope Gregory's explanation to Alexander of the circumstances of the issuing of mandates to Otto for both England and Scotland suggests that there was at least some recognition at Rome of the likely concerns that such an arrangement would cause for the Scots. It has been pointed out that Alexander remained determined for the last decade of his reign to ensure that the provisions of *Cum universi* were in no way eroded or compromised.[714] This determination is articulated most clearly in March 1248, when he obtained from Pope Innocent IV a bull which stated explicitly that the admission of a papal tax collector to Scotland would in no way constitute a precedent that would undermine his and his kingdom's ecclesiastical privileges.[715]

After Otto's legation, Alexander's dealings with the papacy remained cordial but businesslike. Royal and papal interests in the 1240s appear to have coincided particularly in respect of Argyll, where Alexander was seeking to strengthen his grip on the mainland lordship. The establishment of a reliably pro-Scottish candidate in the vacant bishopric of Argyll had formed an important plank in that particular endeavour since Bishop Simon of the Isles resigned his curatorship of the vacant see in 1236. Alexander had succeeded in 1239 in securing the election of William, chancellor of the church of Moray, but his drowning the following year was followed by a second extended vacancy (see p. 182 above). There appear, however, to have been attempts to fill it before the eventual appointment of Bishop Alan in 1250; the initiative in that, however, may not have been the king's. In May 1244, Pope Innocent IV sent a mandate to Master Martin, his nuncio in England, to investigate the election of one Master John, rector of the church of 'St Bean Major' in the diocese of Lismore.[716] There has been some debate over whether this was the see of Lismore in Ireland, or the see of Argyll using the name of the location of its cathedral – the church of St Moluag on the island of Lismore – but the consensus is that it was the Scottish see.[717] The candidate was evidently a local man and was perhaps associated with the independently minded Eógan of Argyll, who was seeking to keep the power of the Scottish crown at arm's length. It is not known how Master Martin acted on his commission but, given that the diocese

was still vacant five years later, it is possible that the process of Master John's election was found to be uncanonical and was quashed by the commissioners.

The Scottish cleric most concerned with the affairs of the diocese of Argyll after 1241 was Bishop Clement of Dunblane, a man who stood high in the opinions of both Alexander II and the papacy. His standing with the king may have conditioned Pope Innocent IV's decision to appoint Clement as papal tax-collector in Scotland for the levy agreed at the 1245 Council of Lyons to finance a new crusade. On 23 October 1247, the bishop received Innocent's commission to collect the agreed twentieth of clerical revenues and other pious offerings and payments, and to transmit 3000 *livres tournois* into the hands of named agents, with further instructions issued to other diocesans to aid his efforts.[718] No records survive, however, to indicate how effective the tax-collection effort was, how it was undertaken, or how much was raised. The appointment of a Scottish bishop, however, does show understanding on the part of the papal administration in Rome of the dangers in provoking hostility from both the Scottish clergy and their king through assignment of collection responsibilities to a man based outside the kingdom, especially in England. In that regard, it was a significant advance on the ineptitude and insensitivity that had been displayed during past tax-gathering endeavours, most of which had effectively failed through the refusal of the Scots to cooperate with English or continental collectors. Unfortunately, however, it was a one-off arrangement; when in 1248 a second clerical subsidy was imposed for the general needs of the Church, the collector appointed was an English-based Franciscan.[719] On that occasion, however, Alexander secured a bull from the pope confirming the privilege earlier conceded to the Scots that only legates sent *a latere* were to be admitted to the kingdom, and that the current tax-collector's commission was not to form a precedent. In his careful defence of his realm's ecclesiastical privileges, Alexander displayed a keen awareness of the dangers that even marginal encroachment represented; for him the admission without conditions of an English-based tax-collector threatened an erosion of the protection which *Cum universi*, at its 1218 reissue, had given. Alexander remained willing throughout the second half of his reign to be a loyal son of the Church, but only where that loyalty did not compromise the independence of his kingdom or its national Church.

Episcopal Appointments and the Needs of the Crown

In his steadfast defence of the independence of the Scottish Church, Alexander was acting largely with an eye to the political consequences of any increase in external influences over ecclesiastical affairs. Despite the long struggle of popes and reforming clerics since the middle of the eleventh century to limit what was seen by them as interference by secular powers in religious matters, a struggle which led to the bitter conflict of the Investiture Crisis, and the bruising which his own father had received in his efforts to control appointments to the key bishoprics of his realm, the political significance of the Church in Scotland required Alexander to maintain a tight grip upon it.[720] As temporal lords who exercised great power and influence locally, the episcopate were key to royal strategies to establish their regime in regions remote from the centres of Scottish royal power. Indeed, even great religious reformers like David I had still used the insertion of suitably reliable clerics into strategic bishoprics as a device to extend his reach into territories where he otherwise lacked a direct presence. Throughout the twelfth century, a succession of royal chaplains and clerks had been nominated to bishoprics, many in dioceses in the north and west of the kingdom, where Scottish power was shallowly bedded. Of course, not all such appointments were for purely strategic reasons: some were simply exercises in good lordship, where a loyal and diligent servant was being rewarded for his years of fine service in the royal administration.

It has been commented that the Church in Scotland became in the later medieval period very much a department of government, staffed by senior royal officials and used by the crown as a source of funding to advance the careers of crown servants, but the same charge can be made for the thirteenth century. We should, however, guard against attributing every appointment of a royal clerk to a bishopric or major benefice as a demonstration of royal patronage and manipulation, or a decision driven by a considered political objective. Indeed, as charges brought against Bishop Walter of Glasgow in 1218 demonstrate, royal clerks were quite capable of seeking their own advancement where they saw the opportunity. Walter, it was claimed, had bought his appointment to the bishopric in 1208 through payment of 100 merks to the chamberlain Philip de Valognes, and a promise of an even greater sum to Queen Ermengarde to use their influence with King William on his behalf.[721] Although that charge was dismissed by the Pope Honorius III, even the suggestion of such illicit dealings risked grave damage to the reputation of the Scottish crown in ecclesiastical

eyes.

Despite such dangers, Alexander and his councillors showed a willingness to make use of bishops as political agents almost from the beginning of his reign. The placing of reliable clerics into politically sensitive or strategic dioceses was hardly an innovatory policy, but Alexander pursued it with an enthusiasm that can often seem at odds with his personal faith and apparent commitment to forms of organised religious life that were believed to be most free from secular entanglements. His first use of an episcopal appointment in this way occurred at Carlisle, where he was seeking rapidly to build up a foundation of local political support upon which to secure his new regional power structure. The bishopric had been vacant since the middle of 1214, with King John in possession of the temporalities of the see and in no hurry to fill the vacancy. When Alexander took the city in August 1216, he quickly found committed allies in the canons of the Augustinian cathedral–priory, who as a community swore fealty to him and began to conduct negotiations on his behalf with leading members of the rebel baronage in England. As the chapter of the cathedral, the canons held the right of election of the bishop, and when Alexander nominated one of his clerks to the vacant see they quickly gave their approval in a formal election. Although no surviving source names the bishop-elect, the denunciation of the canons and their actions sent to Pope Honorius III by Henry III's council in April 1217 stated that he was an excommunicate.[722]

Given Guala's treatment of two of Alexander's senior clerical servants – his chancellor, William del Bois, and Robert de St Germain, both of whom were required to seek personal absolution from the pope following the ending of the interdict in 1217 – it has been argued that one of them is the likely candidate at Carlisle.[723] Control of the bishopric by one of Alexander's closest clerical servants would have greatly enhanced Scottish influence within both the city and the wider diocese, boosting the king's efforts to construct a sound basis for his re-establishment of Scottish lordship over the region. The danger that such an appointment posed for English royal power in north-western England, regardless of the question marks over both the election process and the spiritual status of the bishop-elect in 1216, ensured that his election was speedily quashed once Carlisle had entered King Henry's peace.

The significance of the bishopric of Carlisle to Alexander's designs was such that he was likely to have wished to bestow it on one of his

most trusted advisers and senior officers. It is unlikely that such a man was Robert de St Germain who, although having been in Scotland since 1199 and in royal service since 1213, had also displayed strong ties to the French royal family.[724] Certainly, he had achieved sufficient prominence in Scotland and was regarded as of suitable stature to be a member of the embassy led by Bishop William Malveisin that Alexander despatched to King John in July 1215, but in the following months he appears to have moved from Alexander's service into that of the Dauphin Louis. Indeed, in 1212 he had already appeared in the company of one of King John's bitterest clerical opponents – Master Simon Langton, brother of Stephen Langton, archbishop of Canterbury and the Dauphin's chancellor – receiving a pension from the French prince.[725] In spring 1217 Robert was publicly preaching the justice of Louis's cause, an action which earned him the implacable hostility of Guala in the coming months and his being named amongst the four clerks whom the legate specifically excluded from the peace terms on offer to Louis after the defeat of his army at Lincoln that June.[726] Deprived of his benefices and still under suspension, he travelled to Rome to seek personal absolution from the pope. This he received from Honorius III on 7 June 1218 but, in the pope's declaration of the fact, it was stated that absolution had been given at the petition of King Philip of France and the Dauphin Louis, not the king of Scots.[727] Nevertheless, Robert appears to have returned to Alexander's service and was again active as an envoy on his behalf in the diplomatic manoeuvrings over the Anglo-Scottish peace negotiations in the period 1218–20, resuming also a connection with Bishop Malveisin.[728] There is, however, nothing to suggest that he stood particularly high in Alexander's favour during this brief episode of renewed diplomatic service, and certainly no indication that he was considered as a candidate for any bishopric. His final disappearance from the surviving record in 1220/1 probably marks his death.

Robert's close association with the Capetian cause in 1216–17 would not have commended him to Alexander as a prospective bishop at Carlisle. For Alexander, what was necessary was an unquestionably loyal Scot who would promote his policy of integration of English Cumbria into his kingdom, not a man who looked to Louis, the would-be king of England, for lordship. From that perspective, the more likely candidate for advancement to the bishopric is William del Bois. He had been a clerk in Scottish royal service since at least 1193 and had received the chancellorship from King William in 1211, probably being advanced to the archdeaconry of Lothian in the diocese of St

Andrews shortly afterwards.[729] At Alexander's first Edinburgh council in January 1215, William was confirmed in his office and continued to serve as chancellor for a further eleven years.[730] He was clearly held in high regard by Alexander as a trusted and capable councillor and servant and, unlike Robert de St Germain, had a quarter of a century of unbroken attachment to the service of successive kings of Scots by the time of the Carlisle election. As has been pointed out by Keith Stringer, an attempt to place the royal chancellor into one of the northern English bishoprics when opportunity arose matched the policy considered by David I at Durham in the 1140s. David's efforts to advance his chancellor William Cumin in the see of Durham could have provided the foundation upon which more secure Scottish control of north-eastern England could have been built;[731] Alexander may have seen similar possibilities with his chancellor at Carlisle. Although, unlike his ancestor, Alexander did succeed in having his man elected to a northern English see, the bid foundered before William could be consecrated. Indeed, even if Alexander's candidate had been successfully consecrated it is unlikely, given Guala's suspension and deprivation of all clerks who supported the rebels in England, that the bishopric would have been retained. Absolved by Guala, William was restored to his benefices and offices by Pope Honorius in November 1218, and was to give Alexander a further eight years of service as chancellor before resigning in 1226 on the grounds of ill-health.[732] Opportunities arose in those later years of service to advance the chancellor to a bishopric in Scotland, but none were taken; perhaps none carried the strategic significance in Alexander's mind that Carlisle had done.

Despite the fallout from his involvement at Carlisle, political imperatives continued to drive Alexander's interventions in the appointment of bishops in particularly sensitive sees. It was political considerations which determined his appointment of Gilbert de Moravia, archdeacon of Moray, as successor to Bishop Adam in the see of Caithness. The detail of the appointment process survives in *Gesta Annalia* and *Scotichronicon*, which record that the new bishop was chosen in the course of Alexander's punitive expedition against Adam's killers 'in the presence of the lord king and the chief men of his host'.[733] Gilbert, a kinsman of the regionally powerful lord of Sutherland and himself in possession of an extensive lordship centred on Skelbo in the south-east of the province, was not just an educated and experienced senior cleric, but he also enjoyed both an established local presence and the support of the king's rising regional strongman,

William de Moravia.[734] His selection was an unmistakable act of royal policy but, despite its blatant flouting of the provisions of the Fourth Lateran Council in respect of the processes for episcopal elections, the pope was not only happy to sanction the decision but also lauded Alexander for his rapid and decisive intervention as a loyal son of the Church in dispensing justice to those who had slain their bishop. Alexander's trust in Gilbert was well placed, for although hard detail is lacking of the mechanisms he used to consolidate his temporal and spiritual authority within his diocese, it is evident that he was successful in ensuring that the peace which the king's savage reprisals for Adam's murder had won was turned into lasting control. Gilbert's later veneration as a saint was built principally on his spirituality and his role in the reorganisation of a diocese where the structures of religious life were still exceptionally rudimentary nearly a century after its establishment in the time of David I, but it was presumably those same organisational skills and abilities as a co-ordinator and unifier that made real the integration of Caithness into the Scottish realm.

The entrusting of a diocese in a politically sensitive region to a skilful, experienced and reliable man was pursued with equally good effect at Whithorn in 1235. The death early in 1235 of Bishop Walter of Whithorn, the former chancellor of the recently deceased Alan of Galloway, presented Alexander with a challenge and an opportunity.[735] As the see of Galloway, Whithorn carried great influence in a territory over which Alexander was struggling to impose his authority. Appointment of a reliably pro-Scottish candidate in the manner attempted at Carlisle and successfully implemented in Caithness would have greatly strengthened Alexander's position, but there were other external factors that required consideration: Whithorn was a suffragan of York, and the election was subject to English archiepiscopal oversight. Given current tensions in Anglo-Scottish diplomacy, Alexander could not count on securing either the archbishop's or Henry III's support for the nomination of a suitably pro-Scottish candidate. Indeed, there was a strong possibility that Henry would attempt to advance English interests in a see where Angevin influence had been strong for over half a century. Alexander, however, was not prepared to observe the ecclesiastical or diplomatic niceties and pass up an opportunity to install a dependable agent into a key position in Galloway; on 25 February the Cistercian monk Gilbert, master of the novices at Melrose and formerly abbot of Glenluce in Galloway, was elected to the vacant see.[736] According to

the Melrose chronicler's account of the process, Gilbert was elected 'by the whole people and clergy of Galloway, excepting the prior and convent of Whithorn'. As subsequent events were to demonstrate, however, the moving hand behind Gilbert's election was Alexander's, not the hand of God inspiring the faithful in their choice, and nor was the will of the people of Galloway settled on the matter.

Alexander may have wished for a quick settlement of the affair with rapid progression from election to consecration, but that wish was rapidly dashed. Three weeks after the election of Gilbert, the prior and canons of Whithorn, who considered themselves as constituting the chapter and sole elective body of the diocese, advanced one of their own number as their candidate for the bishopric.[737] Their election of Odo, former abbot of Dercongal in Nithsdale, was unquestionably canonical and complied with the policies promulgated at the Fourth Lateran Council, which had placed the powers of election in the hands of the diocesan chapter. With the force of papal procedure behind Odo's cause, it swiftly became evident that there would be no quick fix which would permit Alexander to impose his man. In the context of the still current political instability in Galloway, it is tempting to see the canons' actions as a sign of native resistance to the Scottish king's schemes; closer examination suggests more self-interested motivation. Most of the episcopal elections at Whithorn over the preceding century had been driven by external influences; only that of Bishop Walter in 1209 appears to have been a locally managed affair, and even then it had probably been controlled by Alan of Galloway. If anything, the canons may have used local resentment of Alexander's intervention in the Galloway succession as a convenient cover for an effort to secure control of the election process. The 1215 Lateran decrees may have given them hope for an end to conflict between the bishops and their convent through election of one of their brethren; Alexander's nomination of Gilbert had surely dashed that hope. For the canons, a challenge to Alexander's actions based on appeal to recent papal policy concerning episcopal elections was the only route they could take to end what may have been decades of tension at Whithorn.[738]

For six months the rivals argued their case back and forward through the courts of Archbishop Walter Grey of York.[739] The case hinged on the legitimacy of the two different procedures used: Alexander claiming Gilbert's unanimous election 'by clergy and people', resorting to the traditional formula which had been

superseded in 1215, while the canons appealed to the novelty of capitular election and their rights as the chapter to effect that.[740] References by Odo and his brethren to interference in the election by unnamed foreign clerics and secular powers were clearly intended to cast the propriety of Gilbert's election into doubt and raise a taint of possible simony over the process.[741] Their comments concerning the king of Scots, 'who now holds Galloway', and to 'the war being waged in Galloway by him', leave no room for doubt from where the secular interference was coming.[742] These comments have been used to suggest a partisanship on the canons' part in the rising in Galloway in support of Thomas son of Alan,[743] but there is no evidence to support that view in any contemporary account. In all of the lengthy litigation which saw Odo win appeals to York and Rome, it was not the political background to the election which carried weight but the strength of his case in current canon law. Odo's failure in the end to have his election confirmed was not determined by any weakness in his canonical position but probably lay more with Alexander's diplomatic influence and Pope Gregory's recognition of where the greater benefit to the Church's interests lay. Despite his several successes in challenging Gilbert's election, it was Odo who ultimately lost the unequal contest, and on 2 September 1235 Alexander's man was finally consecrated at York Minster by Archbishop Grey.[744]

Alexander's hopes for Bishop Gilbert as an agent on his behalf in Galloway were quickly realised. When Thomas son of Alan renewed his bid to win his father's lordship late in 1235, it was Gilbert, described as a former friend of Alan, who led the delegation which secured the surrender of Thomas's chief supporter.[745] Alexander had clearly recognised the worth of placing a man who had both strong local connections and close associations with the Scottish crown into the see at that time. Politics may have prevailed over canonical process, but it delivered a positive result and not least for Galloway in that, if the Melrose chronicler is to be believed, Gilbert's mediation averted further bloodshed and speeded a return to stability in the region. Under the new Cistercian bishop's close oversight, moreover, the Church in the diocese benefited from a strongly reformist cleric who worked hard to put the ecclesiastical institutions of his diocese onto a firm footing and to improve the spiritual provision for his flock. Alexander's principal motive in securing Gilbert's appointment had been political, but it is likely that his choice of candidate had been founded as much on spiritual qualities as on his dependability as a royal agent.

In Carlisle, Caithness and Whithorn Alexander may have fitted the obvious man to the see, but in most of his other interventions in episcopal elections there is a greater sense of the nomination being a means of rewarding a prominent royal servant. Neither William del Bois nor his short-lived successor as chancellor, his own former clerk Thomas of Stirling, had secured effective promotion to a bishopric, but Thomas's successor, Master Matthew Scot, apparently had ambitions in that regard.[746] Matthew, who may have been a canon in Dunkeld cathedral, had been appointed to the chancellorship late in 1227.[747] In the following year, when Bishop Adam Calder of Aberdeen died, Matthew was said to have been elected in succession to him but to have turned down the opportunity, supposedly because he hoped for greater things.[748] Instead it was another royal clerk, Gilbert of Stirling, who was elected to the bishopric of Aberdeen.[749] It is possible that Matthew was anticipating the death of his own diocesan, Bishop Hugh de Sigillo, a former clerk and scribe of King William who had held the see of Dunkeld since 1214 and whose bishopric was regarded as next in seniority if not in wealth amongst Scottish dioceses after St Andrews and Glasgow. When Hugh died, probably in winter 1229/30, Matthew was elected in his place but himself died shortly after without apparently having his election confirmed.[750]

Matthew's successor proved to be the longest-serving of Alexander's chancellors. William de Bondington, who had been a clerk of Matthew's predecessor, appears to have succeeded in the office after a lengthy hiatus; he first appears as chancellor on 30 March 1231, nearly a year after Matthew's death.[751] Bondington's career has, remarkably, been studied little by modern scholars, but from what has been gathered there is no evidence for any connection with the royal household before 1231. His appointment to the chancellorship, however, marked the beginning of a meteoric rise and a long, largely successful career which speaks of great ability as an administrator and royal councillor, a judgement apparently confirmed in the brief but positive obituary which he was given in 1258.[752] In 1232 the long-serving Bishop Walter of Glasgow died, and Alexander may have moved swiftly to encourage the election in his place of his new chancellor.[753] The canons of Glasgow were probably amenable to the king's likely expectation: having the chief royal legal officer and a leading figure in the king's council as diocesan was likely to be advantageous to them. Early in 1233, William de Bondington was elected to the bishopric, which he was then to hold in conjunction with the chancellorship until at least 1247 and possibly until the end

of the reign, continuing as bishop of Glasgow until his eventual death in 1258.[754]

Unlike other leading royal clerks who normally resigned their secular offices when advanced to a bishopric – for example, David de Bernham, who stepped down from his role as chamberlain on his election to St Andrews in 1240[755] – William held onto office with no indication of any qualms over the incompatibilities of his two roles. A very worldly cleric who enjoyed the trappings of secular power which his role as royal chancellor gave him, he was also active in his see and obedient to papal commands. In 1240, for example, he was summoned by Pope Gregory IX to Rome along with Bishop de Bernham, to attend what proved to be an abortive council, and was absent from the kingdom from early December 1240 until early summer 1241.[756] He may have attended a second, successfully gathered council summoned to Lyons by Pope Innocent IV in December 1244, and which assembled for its sessions there from late June until mid-July 1245. De Bernham was certainly there, and it is likely that de Bondington was likewise present, although it has been suggested that Master Reginald of Irvine, who appears as a royal envoy to the curia in September 1245 and who was one of Glasgow's archdeacons, may have attended the council as a proctor for the cathedral chapter and as a representative for his bishop.[757] Active as the great rebuilder of the cathedral church at Glasgow, an energetic diocesan attentive to the needs of his see and a regular papal judge-delegate, he was also able to discharge his duties as chancellor effectively.[758] His ability to adequately carry out his responsibilities in both his spiritual and secular roles, however, probably speaks more of the development of the royal chapel as a professional chancery staffed by skilled clerks who could deputise for the chancellor and operate with his limited oversight than for his personal energy.

Where Carlisle, Caithness and Whithorn show concerns for strategic political interests, and Glasgow and St Andrews appear as rewards for high-flying royal servants, in his dealings with other elections Alexander displayed clearer religious motivations. In no case is this truer than in the 1233 election of the Dominican friar Clement to the vacant and deeply troubled see of Dunblane.[759] There is no evidence to link Alexander directly with Clement's election, which eventually arose from a papal mandate sent to the bishops of Brechin, Dunkeld and St Andrews,[760] but given the king's recorded patronage of the new Order and support for their principles (see pp. 219–20 below), it is

highly likely that he exerted his influence to secure the appointment of the well-educated, energetic and capable friar. Certainly, he must have given his approval for such an unusual appointment. Dunblane was in a poor state by the early 1230s when its bishop, Osbert, died: poorly endowed, lacking access even to teind income through his and his predecessors' over-generous appropriation of parish revenues to monasteries, and with only a rudimentary structure of diocesan government.[761] Clement, university educated and with an already established reputation within his Order and in the international scholarly community, possessed the skills to tackle the ills of the diocese, whatever the concerns of the Dominicans over the loss of a much-needed leader to the ranks of the episcopate.[762]

In the seven years after his consecration he threw himself into the reorganisation of his diocese, seeking to place its finances on a sound footing and to provide it with a proper chapter and administrative apparatus.[763] There is very limited evidence for closeness with Alexander over the last sixteen years of the king's life when he was bishop, but such occasions as he does appear as a witness to royal acts or in attendance at gatherings suggests that he remained in the king's favour. His significance to Alexander perhaps took on a new complexion in the 1240s as western mainland affairs began to loom large in the king's thoughts, for perhaps as early as 1241 he had been given oversight of the see of Argyll during the vacancy there. His role in the final months of Alexander's life, accompanying the king on his expedition to Argyll, has already been discussed (see p. 188 above). Given the king's attachment in the latter years of his reign to the new expression of spirituality represented by the Dominicans, coupled with his continuing need to manage the political influence of the Church for the needs of his crown, it is perhaps fitting that it was Clement who witnessed the king's final acts as he lay dying on Kerrera.[764]

A Quest for Deeper Spirituality?

Over-emphasis on the manipulation of the Church for political ends and on use of its resources and offices as patronage for royal servants can instil a deep cynicism when considering the religious behaviour of a medieval king. Certainly, there is much in what Alexander did in ecclesiastical affairs that leaves the observer with a strong sense of a man who approached religion pragmatically: personal faith and political opportunity apparently jostled for control of his conscience, with faith usually losing the contest. That perception, however, requires to be balanced with other evidence which points to a much

deeper personal faith that drove him to seek new modes of expression. The lists of Alexander's kingly attributes given in chronicle obituaries present him as a pious man who showed due and proper reverence to the Church and suitable respect to the clergy, and who fulfilled his role admirably as a patron and protector of religious institutions.[765] As has been commented before, there is little about these lists of attributes which would encourage us to do anything other than fall back on the stock label of 'conventionally pious' to characterise his religious behaviour.[766] None of the contemporary obituaries make any mention of particular acts of piety or religious devotion, although the Melrose Chronicle had earlier made reference to his status as co-founder of the abbey's daughter-house at Balmerino in 1229 and his grants of extensive lands and jurisdictional rights to Melrose in 1236.[767] It is not until their expansion first in the *Gesta Annalia* (where his role in founding Balmerino in partnership with his mother is mentioned), and then subsequently in Walter Bower's *Scotichronicon* in the 1440s (where reference to Balmerino is omitted but his support for the Dominican Order is stressed), that some indication of his acts of religious patronage are identified.[768]

The first act of substantial religious patronage with which Alexander was associated was the foundation of the last daughter-house of Melrose, the abbey of St Edward at Balmerino on the southern shore of the Firth of Tay in north Fife. Although it is often presented as a joint project between the king and his mother, the process leading up to the foundation and the dedication of the abbey to St Edward the Confessor reveal that it was primarily Queen Ermengarde's initiative. It was she who had started as early as autumn 1225 to acquire the lands with which the proposed new monastery would be endowed;[769] Alexander provided little more than his kingly confirmation of his mother's actions. It was an expensive investment on the dowager queen's part, with the princely sum of 1,000 merks being paid by June 1226 to buy the quitclaim of the property's lay lord, the money probably coming from Ermengarde's personal income. Alexander's part in the foundation process was more practical than material: he simply confirmed his mother's acquisitions, and it was in his name that a petition was delivered to the chapter-general of the Cistercian Order requesting permission for a colony of monks to be sent to a new monastery.[770] Although the Melrose Chronicle identified Alexander by name and simply 'his mother' as the co-founders,[771] he appears to have held himself at one remove from the monastery and largely maintained that distance throughout his reign.

Approval for the new foundation was apparently confirmed in 1227 by the abbots delegated by the chapter-general to inspect the proposal; construction of the monastic buildings in advance of the arrival of the community may have begun soon afterwards and was sufficiently advanced by December 1229 for the monks to take up residence.[772] We have no evidence to place Alexander at or near Balmerino around the time of the formal entry of the colony into the abbey on 13 December, and it was a further two years before he confirmed the monks in possession of their properties in his 'foundation' charter.[773] There is nothing in itself unusual in the lateness of the confirmation – most monastic 'foundation' charters were composed months if not years after the actual formal establishment of the community – but the absence of any evidence for a close personal interest in the abbey between 1229 and his mother's death and burial there in February 1233 is hardly suggestive of a strong attachment to Balmerino. Indeed, Alexander's attention during these years appears to have been focused more on a new project – the introduction of monks of the recently founded Valliscaulian Order – than on his mother's foundation. It was only at the time of Queen Ermengarde's funeral that Alexander made the first of a series of three personal endowments to the abbey, when he freed the monks from the rent of 40 merks annually which they paid to the monks of Arbroath from the appropriated revenues of the parish church of Barry in Angus.[774] That grant, perhaps to procure soul-masses for his mother, was not made good until Christmas 1234, when he gave lands to the value of 40 merks annually to Arbroath to secure their quittance of the rent from Barry. Alexander's second act of patronage, a grant of the lands of Balmerino and Barry in free forest, was possibly also promised originally around the time of his mother's funeral, but was confirmed to the monks on 10 April 1234.[775] The previous day, he granted the monks a remission of rent for a property they held in Crail.[776] None of these grants was on a significant scale, and they are hardly suggestive of particular devotion to the abbey. His final substantial act, the award to the abbey of the lands of Pitgorno and Drumdreel on the north-west side of the Lomond Hills, made between March 1242 and March 1244, continues the sense of semi-detachment from real interest in the community.[777] The lands were part of the *maritagium* of Alexander's youngest sister, Margery, and were to pass into the monks' possession only on her death. Rather than being made on Alexander's initiative, it seems more likely that this gift was arranged for by Margery as provision towards her future salvation,

possibly as her own health deteriorated; widowed and childless, she died in London on 17 November 1244 and was buried in the Dominican friary there.[778] Apart from confirmations of other men's gifts to Balmerino, these few acts represent the sum of Alexander's active support for the abbey; they are hardly a convincing record of pious devotion or personal spiritual identification with a favoured foundation.

Why had Balmerino failed to secure its place as the focus of Alexander's personal faith and religious patronage? One possible answer probably lies not only in its closer association with Queen Ermengarde but also in its likely association with her pro-English policies. A strong case has been made, built largely on Ermengarde's supposed devotion to the cult of St Edward, for the abbey as representing part of the queen's efforts to forge and sustain a close alignment between the Scottish and English royal houses.[779] Indeed, it is suggested that there may even have been a link between the foundation of the abbey and efforts to secure heavenly and saintly assistance in the procreation of a child for Alexander and Joan, who would have been approaching childbearing age around the time of Ermengarde's first moves to procure the founding endowment. If that were part of the queen mother's calculations, Joan's failure to bear Alexander the heir he craved may have succeeded in ensuring the rapid waning of his enthusiasm for the project and his effective withdrawal of interest once Ermengarde died. The connection to Ermengarde and her English sympathies may account for the equally rapid decline in the references to the abbey's dedication to St Edward following her death, with the Edward dedication disappearing soon after Joan's death in 1238.[780] For Alexander, therefore, Balmerino may have symbolised failure that was both personal and national.

On another level, however, there are hints that in the late 1220s and 1230s Alexander was seeking to find something particular to serve as a suitable vehicle for the expression of his spiritual preferences. His association from 1230 with both the recently established and rigorously austere Valliscaulian Order of monks and the altogether new manifestation of missionary religious activity represented by the Dominican friars suggests experimentation in a quest to find a form of devotional activity that better suited his faith. The Valliscaulians, who had originated in the late twelfth century in a community founded in the Val des Choux in Burgundy by Viard, a former Carthusian lay brother, and with the support of Duke Odo of

Burgundy, blended aspects of Carthusian and Cistercian practice in their rule, which was formally sanctioned in 1205 by Pope Innocent III.[781] Their life of seclusion and spiritual devotion, combined with their austerity, was believed to give them a greater proximity to the divine and, therefore, encouraged belief in the greater efficacy of their potential role as intercessors between humanity and God.

The Order made little headway outside of eastern France in its first two decades, with the three colonies which were established in Scotland in 1230–1 representing its entire presence in the British Isles. What route provided them with the connection to Scotland, which resulted in such singular success, is unknown, and the unsubstantiated suggestion that it may have been secured through the support of Bishop William Malveisin of St Andrews, largely on the grounds that he had been in Rome around the time that the rule of the Order was relaxed by Pope Honorius III,[782] should probably be discounted given that none of the three foundations lay in his diocese. Of the Valliscaulian's three Scottish priories, Alexander founded one, Pluscarden to the south-west of Elgin in Moray, while the others – Ardchattan in northern Lorn and Beauly in Ross – were founded by Donnchad mac Dubhghaill and John Bisset, lord of the Aird respectively.[783] Bisset was closely associated with Alexander's government of the north from the 1220s onwards, so his foundation of Beauly may be seen as his personal identification with the king and his policies, while Donnchad appears to have been drawing his kindred and territories into a closer alignment with Scottish royal interests (see p. 181 above).

Unfortunately, the exact sequence of foundation dates is unknown, but it is possible that Beauly may have been the first, receiving a papal confirmation of its possessions on 5 July 1230, while Pluscarden followed in 1231.[784] The coincidence of these foundations with the crushing of the last insurrection in support of the king's MacWilliam kinsmen may be entirely fortuitous but, given the example of the timescale required to secure the Cistercian chapter-general's approval for the foundation of Balmerino, the period of over a year between the deaths of Gillescop and his sons in 1229 and the foundation of Pluscarden may have been adequate for securing approval from Val des Choux. Pluscarden may have had an additional function as a thanks-offering for Alexander's final triumph over the rival and senior royal lineage which had challenged his father's and his own kingship for half a century. Given the brutality with which he completed the

elimination of that family, Alexander may well have felt the need for the prayers of an Order whose austerity and simplicity was believed to place them – and through them those mentioned in their prayers – in a closer and more direct relationship with God. Although we have no hard evidence to confirm the conjecture, it was probably during Alexander's Christmas 1230 court at Elgin that the foundation of the priory was confirmed.[785]

Alexander's foundation charter does not survive. The scale of his endowment, however, is recorded in the confirmation of the foundation made by Bishop Andrew of Moray in 1233.[786] The location of the new priory was in a secluded glen in the king's hunting forest attached to his castle at Elgin and, unlike the complicated process of purchases and quitclaims that needed to be negotiated in respect of Balmerino, Alexander was able to provide it with an endowment directly from royal resources. The award was generous, comprising a large block of land in the valley of the Black Burn centred on the property of Auchtertyre; several mills, including those of Elgin and of the castle at Forres; and multiple salmon nets on the rivers Spey and Findhorn.[787] The physical extent of its landed property may not have been great, but Alexander had provided it with major sources of income from multures, teinds and, most importantly, the lucrative salmon fisheries of Moray. In contrast to his tangential attachment to Balmerino, his generosity to Pluscarden represented a real outlay from his own resources and speaks of a genuine commitment to the success of his new foundation, and a possible determination to make a statement of pious belief that, while not on a scale commensurate with that of his father at Arbroath, exceeded those being made by his own magnates. That commitment may also be seen in the scale and quality of the buildings that he began to construct for the monks, which itself represented a major financial outlay from his own purse.[788] Despite the loss of most of the monastery's records, it is evident from what was built and what passed over to the Valliscaulian's Benedictine successors in the 1450s that Alexander poured money and energy into the new priory, which seems to have provided him with a focus for his spiritual needs, at least for a while.

One rival for the king's pious attention was also making its presence felt in Scotland after 1231. In the same year that the Valliscaulian monks first entered Scotland, we are told by the Chronicle of Melrose, so too did the first Dominican friars – or, as the chronicle calls them, Jacobins.[789] This latter name derives from the

Dominican convent in the rue St-Jacques in Paris, founded in 1218, and it is possibly from there that the first of the Order to come to Scotland were drawn.[790] No contemporary source identifies Alexander as the particular patron of the Dominicans, but Walter Bower, probably drawing on the lost thirteenth-century St Andrews Chronicle which provided him with so much detail for his narrative of the king's reign, reported that it was Alexander himself who had invited them to his kingdom. Furthermore, states Bower, he supported the friars as 'their patron and special agent' and was instrumental in the establishment of numerous of their convents throughout the land.[791] As with the Valliscaulians, later tradition associates their arrival to the efforts of Bishop William Malveisin.[792] While Malveisin may well have become familiar with the friary on the rue St-Jacques while in France during the papal interdict at the end of the Anglo-Scottish war of 1215–17 and subsequent diplomatic missions, there is no evidence to link him unequivocally with the introduction of the Order to Scotland. What is clear from surviving sources is that Alexander proved to be a very generous patron of the Dominicans.

As with his interest in the Valliscaulians, Alexander's attraction to the new preaching Order appears to have been driven by a personal preference for austere and spiritually effective forms of religion. The rapid spread of the Dominicans in the fifteen years since their foundation at Toulouse was due not simply to the attraction to patrons of the friars' comparative cheapness to establish, but also to a firm belief in their superior effectiveness as confessors, preachers and intercessors. An almost purely urban Order and sustained primarily on the pious alms of the king and the emerging urban elites, they were a highly visible phenomenon whose effectiveness was seen in practical ways in the large numbers who attended their services and public preaching. Alexander certainly believed that they were worthy of his support and, while most of the Scottish Dominican friaries' foundation charters and early records have been lost, he may have been responsible for the establishment of the convents at Aberdeen, Ayr, Berwick, Edinburgh, Elgin, Inverness, Perth and Stirling.[793] The influence of the Order on Alexander might best be seen in his close relationship with Clement, who, as we have already seen, was in 1233 elected to the bishopric of Dunblane.[794]

While Alexander was perhaps instrumental in bringing the Dominicans to Scotland, the second of the preaching Orders, the Franciscans, may have come on their own initiative. According to the

Chronicle of Melrose, the Friars Minor – as they were designated, in order to differentiate them from the Dominicans – entered Scotland in 1231.[795] Their first house may have been at Berwick, where a charter dated 28 September 1231 – which is spurious in its existing form but which may incorporate the sense of an earlier original document – records that Alexander gave them a site for their convent and built them a church and other buildings.[796] A second house established through his patronage may have followed soon after at Roxburgh, where the cemetery of their church was dedicated on 4 May 1235.[797] For Alexander, however, these two convents marked the limits of his practical support for the Order. In contrast to his outstanding patronage of the Dominicans, Alexander's benevolence to the Franciscans was somewhat restrained, and it seems to have been more from his magnates that the Friars Minor received their main patronage.

In terms of organised religion, it can be seen that from 1227 onwards Alexander's tastes had moved progressively towards the more austere, simple and supposedly spiritually purer expressions of religious faith. His burst of interest in, first, the Valliscaulian monks and then the Dominican friars appears to mark a quest on Alexander's part to find more perfect intercessors on his behalf with God. This was a preoccupation of most medieval Christian rulers, but Alexander's spread of patronage was on a range and scale unsurpassed by any of his ancestors or successors, with the exception only of the outstanding figure of his great-grandfather, David I. While a significant factor driving this behaviour was surely to earn divine favour and secure his future salvation – something he may have remained acutely anxious to secure after his excommunication by the papal legate Guala – it is striking that his greatest innovation in his endowment of the regular clergy occurred during the period when he was seeking most desperately to father a legitimate heir. It is equally striking that the great flood of patronage which he unleashed towards the Valliscaulians, Dominicans and Franciscans appears to have slowed to a trickle following the birth in 1241 of his son, Alexander. The birth – and, more importantly, the survival – of his heir may have persuaded Alexander that he had at last done sufficient to secure God's favour. For the remainder of his reign, it was the older, more traditional forms of organised religion that received most of his patronage.

There is something of a sense of a hedging of bets with Alexander from the mid-1230s. Just as he was showering his patronage on the

Dominicans in particular, in 1235–6 he confirmed the continuing attachment of the royal house to the Cistercian Order, and to the monks of Melrose in particular. By two of the most significant acts of royal benevolence to Melrose since the days of David I, he added massively to the abbey's endowment. The first gave them extensive lands in Ettrick Forest, a great tract of upland which the monks developed as a series of sheep-walks upon which to graze their swelling flocks. The second act formally freed the lands of Melrose and the four of its granges closest to the abbey from the king's forest, a major concession which permitted the monks to intensify their economic exploitation of their property free from the restrictions imposed by the inclusion of the land within the limits of royal hunting land.[798] These gifts, however, may not have been entirely out-of-the-blue acts, for the one Easter period for which Alexander's very fragmentary itinerary gives firm evidence of his location – in 1231 – it was at Melrose that he celebrated.[799] Furthermore, a strong case has been made that Alexander's generous patronage towards Melrose later in life reflected the injuries which the wars of his youth had inflicted on the abbey, its reputation, properties and dependents.[800] Perhaps no greater act of contrition for his youthful follies and breaches of faith could be made than his decision to seek burial at the abbey, placing his salvation in the hands of the monks and bringing them the pious alms of all gifts made in his memory.

The decision to be interred anywhere other than at Dunfermline, the ancestral mausoleum of his forbears and kin from Malcolm III and Queen Margaret down to his great-uncle Malcolm IV, was not in itself unusual, for both of his parents had chosen to be buried in the monasteries which they had themselves founded. Equally, however, Alexander's keen awareness of his royal dignity, unstinting efforts to enhance the status and security of his kingship, and acute consciousness of the significance of the ancestral heritage which he carried might perhaps lead us to expect a return to burial at Dunfermline amidst his royal progenitors. After all, Alexander had, it appears, also been instrumental in commencing in 1245 the process for the formal canonisation of Margaret, a development which perhaps signalled a revival of interest in the political and dynastic significance of his Anglo-Saxon ancestress and an intention to develop a royal cult around her shrine.[801] Even that move, however, did not lead to his burial at Dunfermline, perhaps because the canonisation process was as yet incomplete and there was no great shrine beside which to have himself interred. Given Alexander's own foundation of a monastery of

a new and spiritually austere Order, coupled with his great benevolence towards the Dominicans in his kingdom, it might have been expected that perhaps Pluscarden, or one of the new friaries, might have received his body. Indeed his youngest sister, who died in London in 1244, had arranged for her burial in the church of the Dominicans there.[802] The possible incompleteness of Pluscarden seems implausible as a reason for its not being his burial place: his father had been interred at Arbroath in 1214 in a church that cannot yet have been finished. Instead, Alexander chose to place his salvation in the hands of an older form of monasticism, in the midst of a community which had proven stalwart in his interests and ever loyal in his service. Faith and belief amounted to far more than religious fashions.

Though the picture we can build from the surviving records of Alexander's religious behaviour is fragmentary, it nevertheless builds into a vision of great complexity and subtle texture. It is also a far from static scene, for we can see that his public religious acts and personal faith change in character, scope and form over the course of his reign. From the somewhat brash and hot-headed youth who seemed careless of his spiritual salvation at the opening of his reign, through the religious experimentation of his middle years, to the rather staid and conventional piety which characterised his end, Alexander pursued an idiosyncratic course. The willingness to risk spiritual censure, even to jeopardise his mortal soul, which his defiance of the papacy brought in 1215–18 signals both the depth of Alexander's conviction in the justice of his cause – after all, God was the final judge – and also a streak of irreligion that perhaps speaks of teenage rebelliousness after the intense religiosity which had imbued the royal household in the closing years of his father's life. As king, Alexander may have been kicking back at constraints which had held him in check. Excommunication and interdict, however, had a sobering effect on the youthful king and the next three decades of his life seem to have witnessed a constant personal struggle to come to terms with the spiritual consequences of that early rebelliousness. In his personal religion, rather than in the political manipulation of the Scottish Church for the needs of government, his energy in the 1220s and 1230s was perhaps directed most towards winning the divine blessing that would deliver him an heir. There was for Alexander no greater evidence of God's judgement and withholding of favour than his personal failure to provide himself with a legitimate heir of his body. The shifts in focus from Balmerino to the Valliscaulians and

Dominicans, and finally back to the Cistercians, do appear to be linked closely with his quest for an heir. Once Queen Marie had provided him with a son in 1241, it is noticeable that Alexander's religious behaviour becomes altogether more conventional and remains focused on traditional activity. In effect, his personal religious behaviour as king reflects closely in character the course of his private life and the nature of his kingship: rebelliousness, innovation and experimentation, and finally conventionalism and stability.

EIGHT

Intellectual and Material Culture in Alexander II's Scotland

One of the most deeply ingrained traditions in Scottish medieval historiography is the notion of the 'Golden Age' which spanned the reign of Alexander III in the second half of the thirteenth century. Although more recent historical research has called into question the reality of many aspects of this era of supposed economic and cultural flowering, pointing to its development as a political device to legitimate the rule of the Bruce kings as 'true' successors of Alexander III and to stigmatise that of John Balliol, there is a substantial body of material evidence to show that Scotland enjoyed great political stability, economic prosperity and vibrancy in its culture across the second and third quarters of the thirteenth century.[803] It is clear that the roots of the golden era which many Scots enjoyed in the later decades of the thirteenth century lay in Alexander II's reign; his Scotland may have been less peaceful and stable than that of his son, but the prosperity, ambition and cultural dynamism which supposedly characterised Alexander III's reign were equally present in that of his father. In this final chapter, we shall explore some of the more neglected aspects of Alexander II's reign, examining some of the surviving evidence for the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of the era. The first part is focused on intellectual traditions, looking in particular at the survival of Gaelic literary culture within the heartland of the kingdom. In part two the focus is on the biggest single survival of the cultural heritage of Alexander II's reign, the architecture through which political and ecclesiastical power and belief were expressed. In both parts the focus is on what can best be regarded as aspects of elite culture, for little survives other than as excavated fragments and hints to cast light on the lives of the bulk of Scotland's people during the first half of the thirteenth century.

Part 1: Intellectual Culture

Perhaps the greatest casualty of the enormous shift in the underlying cultural fabric of Scottish society between the late eleventh and early thirteenth centuries was the Gaelic literate class and much of the corpus of material they had produced. This apparent collapse in the status of a literary language was not a phenomenon unique to

Scotland or to Gaelic, for the eclipse of the dominant 'native' language in northern mainland Britain coincided with an identical dramatic collapse in the status of English as the language of literature, law and government in England.[804] Although that collapse in England can be attributed largely to the impact of the destruction of the native Anglo-Saxon ruling class in the carnage of 1066 and the successive decades of failed rebellion and their replacement with a new, mainly Norman nobility, as well as the establishment of Norman-French clerics in the senior ecclesiastical posts during the same period, the displacement of Old English by Norman-French represented only one dimension in a complex cultural reconfiguration that was occurring across much of western Christendom at this time. In Scotland, the introduction of first an Anglo-Saxon influenced court culture, then a Frankish-dominated one after *c*.1100, contributed significantly to the long-term decline of Gaelic as the chief language of literature and intellectual endeavour; but the survival of the Gaelic nobility and the continued native tradition within the Church ensured that high-status Gaelic-speaking patrons remained, who surely sponsored and maintained native men of letters. In Scotland, as in England, a far greater impact may have been made in the earlier twelfth century by the contemporary development of a Latinate intellectual culture, followed thereafter by the spread of a new vernacular tradition dominated by Anglo-Norman French.[805]

It is all too easy to accept the late nineteenth-century view of Andrew Lang that Gaelic simply accepted the struggle for survival was over before it had even begun when faced in David I by a thoroughly anglicised king possessed of a marked antipathy towards 'the ancient race'. It was not just feudalism, and a flood of 'Englishmen, Normans and Norman ideas', that Lang considered he brought to Scotland but an entirely alien culture, before which 'Celtic men and ideas retreated to their congenial glens'.[806] While this view of a Celtic twilight rudely snuffed out by the brash exponents of Anglo-Norman modernity is now recognised as a product of the upsurge of Celtophilism in the late 1800s, which was in part a coronach for the 'noble savage' whose impoverished descendents and seemingly dying culture loomed large in the consciences of Victorian intellectuals, it retained a tenacious hold long after the wider thesis was discredited.[807] A Scottish historiographical tradition which until the late twentieth century presented the society and culture of the 'Anglo-Norman' colonial community in Lowland Scotland in terms of a national experience for the post-1100 period reinforced a perception that, even where Gaelic

survived, it was already moribund as a language of intellectual or literary endeavour before the arrival of the English- and French-speaking immigrants, and only staged a rearguard and ultimately futile 'renaissance' in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries under the patronage of the Mhic Domhnaill Lords of the Isles.

The most basic problem to be confronted in assessment of the Gaelic culture of Scotland in Alexander's reign is the paucity of surviving material evidence. This problem is further compounded by the fact that much of what literature does survive – king-lists, chronicles, poetry and romance prose – has come down to us through the filter of non-Gaelic, principally Latinised, media. While the material culture of this period is reduced to fragments, albeit some quite substantial ones from which a coherent record of the architectural and plastic artistic achievement can be gained, the surviving evidence for the intellectual output of the period is reduced to much less easily interpretable scraps. There is, however, much that can be inferred through comparison with the still-vibrant literary culture of Gaelic Ireland, which produced a diverse range of outputs including epic and lyric poetry, genealogies and king-lists; evidence for a similar Scottish intellectual tradition, expressed in either Gaelic or Latin, is limited to tantalising remnants, comprising mainly a series of king-lists which trace the descent of the kingship. For a long time, discussion of the purpose and presentation of such lists focused somewhat simplistically on their recitation as a statement of the new king's legitimacy by a *sennachaidh* as part of inauguration ceremony. Such a function is certainly presented in the *Gesta Annalia* account of the enthronement of Alexander III in 1249, preserved in John of Fordun's fourteenth-century text.[808] More recently, however, the status of the *sennachaidh* as a man of letters and member of the Gaelic learned class has been emphasised, and the purpose behind such narration underscored. It was not just a question of personal right being broadcast but 'the credentials of the kingship itself which were being publicly proclaimed and reaffirmed'.[809] The legitimacy and status of the Scottish kingship was being affirmed by the antiquity and continuity revealed by the extended list. The structure of the king-lists, moreover, is not simply genealogical, but was designed to stress the identity of the kingship, and by extension the Scottish people, as *Gaídil* east of the sea. This emphasis of the Scots' status as essentially Irish in terms of historical and cultural identity served to underscore their kingship's credentials and fix its status vis-à-vis, and descended from, other – Irish – kingships.[810] When linked to genealogical

exposition and origin-legend, the Scottish royal line was given both status-enhancing antiquity and the added lustre of blood association with some of the greatest royal lineages of the *Gaídil*. Simple though they may appear, the king-lists are carefully crafted documents.

Little can be said of the men who composed or maintained these lists. To outside observers even in the twelfth century, the Gaelic literate class – which included harp-playing bards – in Scotland was seen to defer to, and seek training among, their Irish counterparts.[811] A regular traffic of Scots to northern Ireland for training, especially to Armagh, is attested through the tenth and eleventh centuries, and as late as 1169 the Connacht-based Irish king, Ruaidhri ua Conchobair, gave the lector there means of support to instruct both Scottish and Irish students.[812] Amongst the components of these students' education was probably a series of poems which listed the succession and pedigrees of various kingships of the *Gaídil*,[813] written by men who had long been regarded as the masters of their craft in Ireland and Gaeldom generally, led by Fland Mainistrech and Gilla Coemáin. It has been commented that their poetry may seem dull and monotonous to modern ears, but their format was functional, as it summarised a range of detailed information to be rote-learned and retained by the Gaelic literati. Gaelic men of letters in Scotland followed this Irish educational tradition, and such king-lists were probably amongst materials composed and developed at centres in the eastern midlands of the kingdom, possibly at places such as Abernethy, Scone, Dunkeld or St Andrews, or perhaps even at Dunblane or Muthill.

The latter was the location of a still functioning monastic school into the early 1220s; Maeldomhnaigh, ruler of the schools of Muthill, and the scholastics of the same place, are on record *c*.1214–*c*.1223.[814] Although, as the Gaelic notes inserted into the *Book of Deer* indicate, Gaelic literary culture was active within a monastic or ecclesiastical context, its exponents were not necessarily clerics. Indeed, as comparison with Ireland should remind us, lawyers, bards, poets and men of letters generally formed a distinct series of classes within wider society and were embedded as deeply into Irish secular political culture as into the Irish monastic church. The king-lists in Scotland may have been produced as intellectual tools, but they functioned as secular political instruments. Their production emphasises the critical role – political as much as cultural – which the Gaelic learned class still played in Alexander's Scotland, where the king-lists remained a

highly effective means of consolidating the authority of the royal line descended from Malcolm III, to the exclusion of rival or collateral lineages. When we consider how real Alexander considered the threat to his kingship from the MacWilliams to be, the significance of the Gaelic literati takes on a new complexion. They, however, were not simply his docile propagandists and, as the now much-cited Gaelic poem voicing criticism of the future David I reveals, they could be vocal in their hostility towards members of the royal house and be sure of finding patronage and an audience amongst segments of the native nobility for such sentiments.[815]

Although the traditional narrative of Scottish cultural development in the thirteenth century has focused on the displacement of Gaelic culture at all social levels by the Frankish- and English-influenced culture of the royal court, it is wrong to present the change as either rapidly achieved or complete in even the south-east and eastern Lowlands of the kingdom by Alexander's reign. Outwith the burghs and monasteries, most of Scotland north of the Forth and west of Clydesdale remained a zone of predominantly Gaelic character well after 1249, and the ecclesiastical communities within which Gaelic intellectual culture had probably its chief exponents continued to enjoy the patronage of the leading native magnates. The conventional image of Alexander's ancestor David I and the reformed Benedictine monastic orders which he introduced to Scotland sweeping away the native ecclesiastical order has been exposed as a gross overestimation of the position in the first half of the twelfth century, and older communities survived to gradually transmogrify themselves, often still under native leadership, into reformed monasteries in the first half of the thirteenth century. The steady accommodation of the two traditions, and particularly the development of a more Latinate intellectual culture as the non-Gaelic-speaking ecclesiastical literati grew more numerous and widespread, however, perhaps led to progressive changes in emphasis within the expression of the Gaelic identity of the Scots and their kingship.

In the king-lists, one of the most significant developments was a wholly new emphasis on the place of Mael Coluim III and Margaret as dynastic founders in place of Cinaed mac Alpin. This representation may have been intended to permit the Scottish monarchy to be presented 'as successors to a prestigious line of English kings', following the example established by Ailred of Rievaulx in the 1150s and Adam of Dryburgh in 1180, and was perhaps the product of the

dominant Anglo-French literate community within the Scottish Church.[816] This new dimension in the royal genealogy, however, at first had little negative impact on the expression of the Irish identity of kingship and people, adding to the claimed heritage of the royal line rather than diminishing it. Sometime in the second half of Alexander's reign, however, a second new dimension marked a fundamental shift in perceptions. This was the inclusion into the king-lists of a Pictish king-list. In the new version that resulted from this merger, Alexander II became the successor to a line of monarchs who had ruled anciently in Scotia – the heart of the kingdom north of the Forth – and not just an émigré Irish dynasty based in Argyll.

It is Dauvit Broun's suggestion that this development reflected a strengthening aim to focus on the territorial identity of the kingdom within mainland Scotland rather than on its kingship's Irish roots, and the emergence of this new portrayal coincides with the first recorded usage of the term 'Scotia' to mean the whole of the territory ruled by the contemporary king of Scots and not just the core territory between Moray in the north and the Forth in the south. This interpretation seems likely, as it was in the first quarter of the thirteenth century that a clear articulation of a hard-edged territorial identity for the kingdom of the Scots emerged from the fractured Anglo-Scottish diplomatic relations between kings William and Alexander II and John in England. Professor Broun has observed that, in the longer term, this new expression 'paved the way for a more spectacular statement of the kingdom's antiquity' and has proposed that it was largely a late thirteenth-century response to the threat to Scottish independence posed by Edward I of England.[817] However, its first emergence in the reign of Alexander II points to an earlier evolution as part of a conscious promotion of the royalty of Scotland's kings, perhaps linked closely to his efforts to secure the rights of unction and coronation for Scottish monarchs in the 1220s and 1230s, and the attempts to remove the lingering taint of inferiority which had hung over Scottish kingship since 1174. It was not just in the 1290s and 1300s that an appeal to ancient lineage and equally ancient identity of kingship, people and land was considered a powerful tool against an external predator.

The shift in emphasis away from an exclusive Irish identity within the royal genealogies in the thirteenth century should not be taken as a sign of a total eclipse of Gaelic literary culture in Scotland. In monastic communities like Abernethy, Inchaffray or Monymusk,

which seem to have preserved much of their Gaelic character into the mid-thirteenth century despite their embrace of Augustinian principles, older traditions probably survived long after the somewhat superficial transformation that the 'reform' of such monasteries represented. Aristocratic households, especially those of the greater native magnates like the earls of Strathearn, moreover, blended the culture of the old and the new. Indeed, it is perhaps no coincidence that the ecclesiastical centres in central and eastern Scotland in which Gaelic characteristics apparently survived longest were clustered thickest within the spheres of influence of four of the greatest Gaelic magnates: the earls of Atholl, Fife, Mar and Strathearn. Strongly Gaelic in membership and culture, the households of the earls still had a place for Gaelic men of law and letters into the thirteenth century and beyond.[818]

It is ironic that much of our evidence for the continuing role of the *sennachaidh* and *britheamh* (Latin *iudex*, Scots *doomster* or *dempster*) exists only in the texts produced for the Latinate culture which gradually displaced Gaelic through the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Charters in Latin reflect the growing acceptance of the new form of legal title that was being introduced as a mechanism to accommodate newcomers into the social fabric of the kingdom and, more importantly, to define the relationship between the king and his vassals. The incorporation of Gaelic terminology in Latin charters to describe office-holders and particular rights and renders due to or from the charter recipient may reflect a higher degree of survival of Gaelic culture in an area or, simply, the scribe's lack of an appropriate Latin word to substitute for the native term. The progressive disappearance of Gaelic terminology in documents produced in the king's writing office or monastic scriptoria may reflect more the growth of an appropriate Latin vocabulary than the actual decline of usage of the Gaelic forms in common currency.

A sense of decline or displacement is accentuated by the non-survival of Gaelic annal texts akin to those which continued to be produced in Ireland throughout the Middle Ages. King-lists apart – and even those are generally Latinised in format – our only medieval chronicle or annal records are Latin texts produced in the intensely Latin, continental or anglicised cultural milieu of the monasteries of the reformed monastic Orders planted largely in eastern Scotland. The most substantial of these surviving pre-fourteenth century Scottish chronicles is the Chronicle of Melrose, which was composed by a

number of hands from the late twelfth through into the thirteenth century.[819] Sadly, the rich detail which it contains for the later years of King William's reign and the earlier part of Alexander II's peters out after 1222, depriving us of an expansive record for many of the key events of the central years of the reign. It has been noted that from March 1208 until 1222 its entries are fuller than the brief notes for the preceding period, give much greater attention to foreign as well as domestic affairs, and are concerned particularly with the activities of King John of England and his political and ecclesiastical difficulties at home, and with events in northern Scotland.[820] These changes, it has been proposed, were largely influenced by, if they were not the personal contributions of, abbots Adam and William of Melrose, whose abbacies lie in the first half of the period covered by this rich set of entries. Their input may not have ended with their departures from Melrose. Adam in particular, who in 1213 was elevated to the bishopric of Caithness, probably continued to feed information to the chronicler at Melrose; it was probably from Adam that he obtained much of his northern material for the early years of Alexander's reign.[821] Adam's murder in 1222 coincides, perhaps significantly, with a reversion to the brief, staccato style of entries typical of the pre-1208 composition.

While Adam perhaps continued to influence the chronicle from a distance, at Melrose his next-but-one successor, William de Courcy, may have been the man who maintained the especial interest in the actions of King John. De Courcy, the former abbot of Holmcultram, was possibly a kinsman of John de Courcy, the English adventurer who had carved out a lordship for himself in eastern Ulster in the last quarter of the twelfth century, and whom King John had toppled through the agency of the de Lacy family between 1200 and 1205. This possible kinship connection may have been the factor which produced the particularly hostile recording of King John's actions, which seem at pains to stress the king's personal behaviour in his conduct in Scotland in early 1216.[822] Although his tenure of the abbacy at Melrose was brief (1215–16), de Courcy, along with Adam, does appear to have had a significant and lasting impact on the content and style of the chronicle, continuing to send information to his former abbey after his election to the abbacy of Rievaulx. Both men appear to have carefully selected material for inclusion with particular purposes in mind. Adam, for example, had been a Scottish envoy in the crisis in Anglo-Scottish relations which culminated in the 1209 'treaty' of Norham, and may have been seeking to preserve a

detailed Scottish record of both the circumstances behind that settlement and its aftermath. A particular section of items detailing Anglo-Scottish relations may have been an aide-memoire produced for Adam around the time of further intense negotiations between the kingdoms at Durham in 1212.

The chronicle, then, appears to have been used as a source of hard data to be employed possibly for political–diplomatic purposes by an abbot who was intimately involved in complex negotiations. A similar purpose may have coloured William de Courcy's judgement of what to include in the chronicle. But the record was not simply of Anglo-Scottish diplomatic wrangling and military brinkmanship, for Adam's contribution to the chronicle appears also to have extended to an interest in major religious affairs and spiritual matters. In this, his selection of material may have had a didactic purpose, providing an illustration of the missionary activities of the Cistercian order, accounts of Christian militancy in the *reconquista*, and action against heretics in France. Here, perhaps, are the traces of an able cleric, concerned to provide his brethren with practical records of spiritual value, as well as an active, secular, political figure equally concerned to preserve an account of the complex and controversial events of 1209–12.

One of the most important sources of information integrated into several later chronicles is believed to be William Malveisin, the Scottish royal clerk who rose to become archdeacon of Glasgow, bishop of Glasgow and finally bishop of St Andrews, and who was much engaged in royal and ecclesiastical diplomacy, which carried him through England and France and placed him at the heart of the political life of Alexander's realm until his death in 1238.[823] Malveisin, according to the early fifteenth-century chronicler Andrew Wyntoun, was also the writer of a 'cornykle' which was kept at St Andrews. Analysis of the early thirteenth-century material embedded in Walter Bower's *Scotichronicon* points to a St Andrews source that was compiled in the 1220s and 1230s, but with material collected in the 1220s that also looked back to events in the period 1209–21.[824] Professor Duncan has suggested that this material may have formed an element in what he describes as a *Gesta Willelmi Regis*, very similar in form to Roger of Howden's *Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi* in an English context, and possibly representing a conscious continuation of that work to narrate the troubled relationship between King William and King John, and the political and religious turmoil in England in the

period 1209–13.[825] While the Melrose Chronicle may have derived some of its contemporary material from this St Andrews chronicle, and a substantial body of data from it appears to have been incorporated by both Wyntoun and Bower into their texts, the loss of what seems to have been a remarkably detailed record of domestic and international events in the closing years of William's reign and the first half of Alexander II's has robbed us of a contemporary perspective on Scottish affairs as detailed as the one produced by Roger of Howden for the period *c*.1174 to *c*.1200.

In comparison to the rich products of Latinate intellectual culture in England during this same period, the handful of surviving Scottish sources and records may seem distinctly jejune. The tantalising glimpses into networks of scholars and information exchange which are afforded by the remaining fragments, however, serve to remind us that there was a much deeper and wider literary tradition – in Gaelic and Latin – which extended across and between the royal, ecclesiastical and magnate nexus. As the names of royal and episcopal clerks reveal, moreover, there was a growing presence amongst the ranks of the household officers of the king and greater bishops of university-educated men who had been trained at the great European intellectual centres as well as at Oxford. Alexander II's kingdom may have lacked a chronicler with the prodigious energy and outputs of the St Alban's monk Matthew Paris, but it was not devoid of men of intelligence, education, ambition and skill who could hold their own amongst the chroniclers and political commentators of the early thirteenth-century Latin west.

Part 2: The Architectural Fabric

The built environment of Alexander II's Scotland can, like the intellectual culture, be caught in a series of glimpses which often provide only tantalising hints but at other times reveal magnificent panoramas of exquisite richness and sophistication. Our evidence is, again, for the top end of the social spectrum, for the perishable nature of the fabric of much of the built landscape of Scotland's burghs or peasant communities has left few substantial traces, most having been heavily damaged by later generations of development on the same sites. Consequently, the architectural record is weighted heavily towards those who could afford to build in stone, but even here it is skewed towards the ecclesiastical rather than the secular elites. The great churches of the kingdom, whose construction is testimony to the growth in real wealth in Scotland and which itself serves to

underscore the availability of cash or credit that was evident in the king's cash gifts to Henry III or purchase of English wardships, constitute the single greatest collective record for the cultural vibrancy of the kingdom and its interconnectedness with the rest of Britain and northern mainland Europe. Although less well known on the European stage than the great churches of England or France, the structures being reared at the major cathedral or monastic centres of Scotland across the span of Alexander's reign include buildings of exceptionally high quality and architectural innovation. The royal and lordly buildings are altogether less impressive in the quality or quantity of their survival, many having fallen victim to the deliberate destruction of castles and other fortifications during the civil wars and wars with England that tore through the realm after 1296. Here, too, however, there is more than perhaps meets the eye, and as with the intellectual culture it is possible to see traces of where Gaelic cultural tastes combined with the aristocratic architectural traditions of the incoming English and continental nobility to produce a distinctively Scottish hybrid style in lordly residence.

Churches, Monasteries and Cathedrals

The first great wave of church building in Scotland began in the second quarter of the twelfth century and was largely complete by the 1180s or early 1190s. Major building projects like King William's cathedral-scale monastic church at Arbroath, probably begun soon after 1178, were far enough advanced for him to be buried in the choir of the church in December 1214, but the building was not completed until 1233, when it was finally dedicated.[826] Remodelling or complete rebuilding of the abbey churches in the later twelfth and early thirteenth centuries was also occurring across Scotland, from Melrose and Dundrennan in the south to Kinloss in the north.[827] In large part, this episode of development reflected the success of the first main phase of foundation before *c*.1150, with the original communities having outgrown their accommodation. This was almost certainly the case at Melrose, where the ambitious church was only completed in the last quarter of the 1100s with the addition of a western narthex, while work on the chapterhouse and cloister buildings suggests that significant expansion was under way on the monastic buildings in the first half of the thirteenth century.[828] It also indicated the economic strength of the monastic communities and the organisation of their often quite substantial landed estates into wealth-generating mechanisms: monasteries not only had the desire but also

the means to rebuild on a grand scale. The fruits of this can be seen very clearly at, for example, Holyrood, whose church was rebuilt in the rich new Gothic style in the early 1200s by masons who drew their inspiration from the innovative work at Lincoln Cathedral, with work on the nave during the second decade of the thirteenth century.[829]

In western Scotland, there was significant early thirteenth-century development at Kilwinning and Paisley abbeys, the church at the former being developed on a monumental scale that dwarfed the adjoining late Romanesque cloister, while at the latter the wealth drawn from the property lavished on the monks by their Stewart patrons saw a similarly ambitious rebuilding programme.[830] The Isles, with their openness to the flow of ideas along the maritime trade routes which ran from western France and south-west England and Ireland to Norway, also embraced architectural innovation, but they seem to have applied the new ideas in castle building rather than ecclesiastical work. At the early thirteenth-century Iona Nunnery, for example, the church was constructed in an Irish-influenced rich late-Romanesque style,[831] which probably reflects the political and cultural orientations of this region of the Hebrides under the domination of the sons of Sumarliði. Further south in Man, however, where the primary ecclesiastical influences came from north-western England through Furness Abbey,[832] both Rushen Abbey and the cathedral at Peel drew on the new Gothic forms arriving from England.

Of the new, large churches being erected in Alexander's Scotland, the first to be started were at the Cistercian monasteries of Culross and Deer, founded by the earls of Fife and Buchan respectively in 1217 and 1219.[833] Culross is the most complete church of the so-called 'Bernardine' plan to survive anywhere in Britain: long, aisle-less nave, short rectangular presbytery with transepts to north and south, both with chapels on their eastern sides.[834] Deer was likewise conceived originally on this simple Bernardine form, but here an aisle was subsequently added on the north side of the nave.[835] Although 'modesty of aspiration' may be reflected in the use of this simple plan, it does not seem simply to have been a matter of the slender resources that may have been given to these two abbeys by their magnatial rather than royal founders being reflected in the smallness and plainness of their form, for it was also a Bernardine plan that was implemented in the first phase of stone construction at the queen mother Ermengarde's foundation at Balmerino.[836]

Despite its royal foundation and the patronage that the queen mother directed towards the abbey, the church was originally a simple building which followed closely the plainness of the older Cistercian churches of the previous century, and to which a lateral aisle on the south side of the nave was a secondary development. Likewise, at the nearby Tironensian abbey of Lindores, founded in the 1190s by the king's uncle Earl David and generously endowed by him with landed resources, rents and fishing rights scattered from central Perthshire to Aberdeenshire, the form of the church was a Cistercian-style Bernardine plan.[837] It is tempting to attribute the simplicity of the plan at these abbey churches to the diminishing flow of patronage towards such traditional expressions of religious devotion in favour of the new preaching orders. However, the prevalence of the form and its apparent longevity – even at buildings like Whithorn cathedral–priory, which enjoyed a substantial flow of revenue throughout the Middle Ages from pilgrims to its shrine of St Ninian but which largely maintained its unaisled form – might suggest that there was perhaps some deeper cultural preference at work.

The most ambitious architectural project in which Alexander was involved directly was the new Valliscaulian priory that he founded at Pluscarden. It followed what was basically a Cistercian-inspired plan of a short presbytery, transepts with a low central tower at the crossing, and longer western limb.[838] The nave was aisled only on one side: the south, on which side the cloister lay, which is unusual in church design.[839] A further oddity with the church is that building work appears to have started at the west and moved east, the style of the presbytery belonging to the first half of Alexander's son's reign in the 1250s and 1260s. It has been suggested that the reason for this was that the site of the presbytery was occupied at first by an oratory – possibly timber-built – which would have served the needs of the monastic colonists in the 1230s. The thirteenth-century nave is heavily ruined, but the transepts and crossing show clearly the scale, ambition and innovation in the building's design, containing evidence for several changes in the design concept during the course of construction. In contrast to the plan and appearance of the other two Valliscaulian houses – Ardchattan and Beauly – both of which were aisle-less cruciform churches, Pluscarden was evidently being erected on a grand scale that reflected the ambitions of its royal patron.

In the grander scheme of things, Pluscarden's church was a relatively minor architectural contribution to the built environment of

Alexander's realm. It was, moreover, simply one of several major ecclesiastical building schemes in progress in the second quarter of the thirteenth century. The two grandest of these projects were the new cathedral church of Moray, which Bishop Andrew de Moravia (1224–42) began to construct at Elgin in the 1220s, and the rebuilding of the eastern limb of Glasgow Cathedral that was commenced by Bishop William de Bondington (1233–58) soon after he became bishop in 1233. The first of these projects was commenced shortly after Andrew de Moravia was elected to the see of Moray and implemented a move from the seat of his bishopric established by his predecessor at Spynie to a new site on the north edge of the nearby royal burgh of Elgin. Nothing of any substance survives at Spynie, but eighteenth- and nineteenth-century accounts suggest that the foundations visible then were of a building roughly 22.6 metres long by 10.7 metres wide, comparable in scale to a moderately sized parish church and probably representing later medieval and post-Reformation parochial use of location rather than the cathedral.[840]

The new church at Elgin was still relatively modest in scale when compared with the great church that was still under construction at this time at St Andrews, or some of the greater abbey churches like Arbroath, but it was a building of ambition and sophistication. What can be disentangled from the later thirteenth-century and subsequent alterations and enlargements to Bishop Andrew's cathedral is a cruciform-plan church comprising an unaisled eastern limb containing the canons' choir and presbytery areas, a crossing with boldly projecting transepts, and a central tower; an aisled nave of six bays, with a seventh western bay formed between a pair of western towers, seems to have been added to the layout at an early stage in construction.[841] The three towers alone are a symbol of Andrew de Moravia's ambitions for his cathedral, for no other contemporary Scottish cathedral had this form, the triplets at Aberdeen and Glasgow being late medieval developments. Only in some of the greatest royal abbeys – especially at Arbroath, Dunfermline and Holyrood – was a central tower accompanied by towers at the west end of the nave, although at several other major churches there may have been unrealised plans to construct such towers.[842] Central and western towers are more common at English cathedrals but were still by no means ubiquitous. English influences, however, are clearly to be seen in the first phases of the new cathedral, the architecture of the surviving earlier thirteenth-century work at Elgin – seen most clearly in the south transept – displaying strong influences from northern

English Cistercian models, such as Kirkstall Abbey in Yorkshire. Rather than being imported directly from there, however, its more immediate inspiration was probably the Cistercian-influenced design of the eastern limb at St Andrews.[843] Work on the church was far enough advanced by the time of Bishop Andrew's death in 1242 for him to be buried in his new cathedral and, although there was some damage to the probably unfinished structure in 1244, it is likely that by *c*.1250 the bulk of the church as conceived of by the bishop had been completed.[844]

Ambitious though Andrew de Moravia's work at Elgin was, it was still the cathedral of a see whose resources were still comparatively slender in the 1220s and which only acquired a degree of substance by the end of Alexander II's reign. In comparison to the church that would begin to rise over the shrine of St Kentigern at Glasgow, Bishop Andrew's original work at Elgin was a modest building, albeit one of some architectural quality. At Glasgow the major rebuilding of the church had been initiated by Bishop Walter (1207–32), who was responsible for laying out the plan of the nave and transepts, and by the time of whose death substantial portions of the nave and crossing had been built.[845] Before that work was completed, however, Walter's successor, William de Bondington, decided to completely remodel the eastern limb of his cathedral to accommodate the canons' choir, provide a more splendid setting for the tomb of St Kentigern in the undercroft of the new choir and presbytery, and generally create a more dignified setting for the elaborate liturgical rituals which were part of the Sarum tradition which he formally adopted at Glasgow.[846] Work may have started in earnest around 1242, when contributions towards the cost were sought from those visiting the cathedral and shrine during Lent.[847] Although the new scheme may have been far advanced by the time of Alexander's death in 1249, it was still only nearing completion around the time of de Bondington's own death in 1258. In an expanded obituary for the bishop recorded in the fifteenth-century *Scotichronicon* of Walter Bower, he was remembered as the man who had 'built his church at Glasgow with marvellous craftsmanship in stone'.[848]

Andrew de Moravia and William de Bondington were not alone amongst the bishops of Alexander's Scotland with ambitions for their cathedral churches. It was possibly under Bishop Gregory (1218–42) at Brechin that work which had started on a new church there shortly before 1200 was brought to completion, the development of its

eastern limb perhaps reflecting his efforts to transform the remaining *celi dé* clerics into a college of secular canons.[849] The church completed for Bishop Gregory comprised of a long, unaisled choir and presbytery to house the clergy, added to the short but aisled nave of five bays with chapels, rather than transepts, at their eastern ends (the existing transepts are part of a restoration undertaken in 1900) which had been erected by his predecessors. The small scale of Brechin reflected the relative poverty of the see, but the church still contained some rich and sophisticated details. Its grand western processional doorway, for example, added as part of Gregory's new design, is one of the earliest of the monumental new portals to be provided in a Scottish cathedral, whilst its choir has a simple elegance that points to a new emphasis on elaborate liturgy and a progressive expansion in the numbers of clergy serving in the secular cathedrals.

Similar developments can be seen at Dornoch, the cathedral of the see of Caithness, where Bishop Gilbert de Moravia (1222/3–45) started work on a new church around the same time that his kinsman Bishop Andrew was beginning work at Elgin.[850] Although it is often claimed that Gilbert's work also reflected a move from the insecurity of northern Caithness, where his predecessor had been slaughtered by his disgruntled flock at Halkirk, to the comparative security of south-eastern Sutherland, there is no evidence to suggest that the cathedral of the see had actually been earlier located elsewhere. The church at Dornoch shared several basic features in common with Elgin – an unaisled eastern limb, crossing with tower and boldly projecting transepts – but was simple and smaller in overall concept, its nave in particular lacking aisles in its thirteenth-century form.[851] It is an exercise in economy, displaying sophistication in the architectural detailing of its surviving mid-thirteenth century eastern limb, but keeping well within the resources of a comparatively poor diocese.

Economy was also a major consideration at Dunblane, where it was claimed by Bishop Clement that, when he had arrived at his see in 1233, he found the existing church roofless.[852] Having in 1237 secured a papal mandate to help him restore the finances of his see, it was probably soon after that date that he began work on a completely new church. From the evidence of the plinth course which extends round the base of the existing building, it seems that the whole plan of the new cathedral was laid out by Clement.[853] The only portion of the church he had inherited that was retained was a twelfth-century tower, which was incorporated into the south aisle of the nave of the

new church. Although the superstructure built upon Clement's ground plan has been expanded and altered, the footprint of the building has remained unchanged since the thirteenth century and comprises an elongated aisle-less choir with a two-storey range extending along the western three-quarters of its north side – housing a chapter-house, sacristy and treasury – and an aisled nave of eight bays. It was an unambitious plan, probably reflecting the need for economy in a see whose resources remained slender even after its bishop's reforming economic efforts. These slender resources meant that work progressed slowly, beginning with the range that runs along the north side of the choir and then moving on to the nave and only finally to the choir proper. Of this work, only the north range was certainly completed by the time of Clement's death; the choir was only finished towards the end of the thirteenth century and, although built on the footprint that had been laid out by him in the 1230s and 1240s, it was built higher and with larger windows than had been fashionable before the middle of the century.[854]

Architectural ambition was not always matched by adequate resources at monasteries as well as cathedrals. At Dryburgh, a decision was taken in the early 1200s to develop the church on a very substantial scale. Unfortunately for the canons, the construction costs of their elegant new church far exceeded the income available to them from their relatively small estate. The result was a protracted building operation that extended through the thirteenth century, involving retrenchment in design and quality, and the abbey's being placed in what in modern terms would be described as 'financial administration', before the work was completed.[855] Even at Melrose, ambition may have exceed income, for there are hints at the end of the twelfth century that the monks were forced to adopt damaging exploitation methods on some of their properties, perhaps in an effort to milk as much revenue as possible from their estate to pay for their still-incomplete church.[856] Despite the popular image of the monks and canons labouring to build their own churches, construction was the product of skilled – and expensive – masons and their teams. If payment was not forthcoming, such men would seek profitable employment elsewhere.

It has not been the aim in this quick brief overview of ecclesiastical architecture of Alexander II's Scotland to provide anything other than an outline of the major building operations and developments that were under way in the course of his reign. The picture that emerges is

of an exuberant burst of activity, with earlier buildings being replaced or enlarged, or wholly new structures being begun. The investment that this construction work represents speaks of confidence and, most importantly, security and stability across most of the kingdom from the eastern borders to Sutherland. It is not a record that sits comfortably with a traditional picture of disturbance and protracted upheaval as Alexander pushed his lordship to the farthest limits of the Scottish mainland, but it perhaps reflects the quieter reality of steady economic and social expansion and development through the first half of the thirteenth century. It is in these monasteries and cathedrals that the maturity of Alexander's kingship has its greatest monument.

Royal and Lordly Residence[857]

Projection of the authority and lordship of the king and his magnates was achieved through a variety of devices, from the small and subtle, like images on coins and the symbolism of seals, to the physically massive and strident, such as castles. Between the late eleventh century and the beginning of Alexander II's reign, the physical settings where rulers displayed their power and authority, and overawed or wooed their greater subjects, began to become more sophisticated in composition and grander in scale as they moved to accommodate aspects of continental European lordly culture that were percolating northwards from Norman England. By the early 1100s the kings of Scots and their greater vassals were beginning to embrace the physical expressions of secular lordship that had been introduced into England from Normandy. The chief manifestation of that physical expression of lordship was the castle, a structure popularly identified with conquest and defence but which performed a far more sophisticated range of functions, amongst which its value as a fortification was a relatively minor component. As centres of administration, tribute-gathering, and production management, and above all as high-status residences whose physical domination of the surrounding landscape symbolised the power and authority of their owners, their presence marked a transition towards that continental style of lordship and landownership which is labelled 'feudalism'. We need, however, to be cautious about viewing the castle as an alien innovation planted in a kingdom where there was no pre-existing physical landscape of lordship which carried that same structural symbolism: native centres of power certainly existed throughout Scotland before 1100, and many of these probably continued in use long after 1200. Limited archaeological investigation of sites that can be dated securely to the

eleventh and twelfth centuries has left us ill-equipped to begin theorising about what native centres looked like, and we have in the past too often resorted to analogy.[858]

Speculation, however, is needed if we are to fill the void in our knowledge of the nature of native lordship centres in the Lowland heartland of twelfth- and thirteenth-century Scotland without a programme of research excavation, but we lack any substantial pre-twelfth-century record evidence to support such theorising. Apart from sculptural representations of probably high-status timber structures – like the hog-back gravestones from Luss or Govan, which seem to depict shingle-roofed, bow-sided halls[859] – there are only scattered incidental references in documents to the physical form of even major royal centres.[860] The only surviving pre-1300 Scottish exchequer records, the rolls for 1264–5, describe the king's hall at the thanage of 'Rathenach' in Moray as having been repaired using double boards in its roof and planks in its walls.[861] Presumably the earlier hall was of similar construction, but the account does not actually say so. Perhaps this plank-and-board building type was the same as the one labelled in the early 1500s as a distinctly Highland tradition.[862] What that late medieval Highland style was, however, other than different from contemporary Lowland Scottish preferences for stone-built towers and adjacent hall blocks, we do not know.[863] In the absence of clearer evidence, we have sought models from elsewhere in the British Isles and northern Europe.

This resort to analogy has seen Scottish archaeologists look south, with excavated late Saxon manorial centres like Goltho in Lincolnshire being offered as general models for Scottish native lordship centres. That site, with its substantial timber hall placed in a courtyard-like arrangement of ceremonial, domestic and ancillary structures within an embanked earthen enclosure, outside which was a church or chapel,[864] was felt to be a likely general form which royal or lordly centres in eastern or southern Scotland could fit into. Certainly, as the seat of a man of some status, it contained all the elements necessary for the display and exercise of power, control of resources and administrative organisation. Re-evaluation of the site at Goltho has pushed its dating forward into the 1130s, a re-dating which perhaps strengthens rather than diminishes its value as a possible model for an indigenous tradition in twelfth-century Scotland.[865] A similar timber hall tradition in lightly defended or open sites occurred in the district between the Tyne and the Forth in the period *c.*600 to *c.*1100,[866] and

such structures have been interpreted as locations for the feasting associated with hospitality rents, like *conveth* or *wayting*, public displays of material wealth, and gift-giving ceremonies. Evidence for continuity of settlement and high-status use at such sites through the twelfth century and into Alexander II's reign, however, is almost nonexistent.[867] Poor survival of documentary evidence and limited excavation at documented pre-twelfth century sites perhaps accounts for this apparent abandonment of early centres, for work at Cruggleton Castle in Galloway unearthed evidence for continuity there in both occupation and basic structural forms from the late 700s until the late 1100s. Excavation exposed the rock-cut post-holes of an eighth-century 'hall' which appears to have continued in use until *c*.1185–1200.[868]

Halls, then, provide us with a common denominator as a key physical expression of lordship. There are, however, dangers in the manner in which structures are labelled as 'halls', often qualified by labels like 'feasting', 'banqueting', 'drinking' or 'ceremonial', for perceptions of such structures are too often coloured by post-medieval romantic ideas shaped by the likes of Sir Walter Scott or Hollywood screenwriters. Modern notions of the form and function of halls – basically rectangular in plan with symbolic internal zoning into high- and low-status ends – are also laden with cultural determinism and deeply entrenched prejudices which can blind us to alternative architectural expressions of halls. For example, non-rectilinear structural forms have long been considered in Britain to be in some way primitive, or used principally in the medieval period for non-standard or socially inferior buildings. Such attitudes have coloured analysis of two twelfth-century timber structures which stood centrally in the courtyard of the royal castle at Peebles. The larger structure was interpreted as circular, timber-built, and tower-like, around 12 metres in external diameter, with its roof structure supported on four massive posts. As a round building in an age supposedly of squares and rectangles, it was interpreted as a windmill rather than a high-status component of the castle complex.[869] Similar timber-built sub-circular structures were excavated at Rattray in Aberdeenshire and Cullykhan in Banffshire, but no suggestions as to their function have been advanced.[870] No such doubt exists, however, in respect of the circular timber structure which crowned the later thirteenth-century motte of the Giffards at Strachan in Kincardineshire: it may have had two storeys, was about 11 metres in diameter, and is identified as a 'hall'.[871] Its excavator later compared

it to an Iron Age roundhouse.[872] Strachan's importance is as a demonstration that circular or sub-circular structures remained in vogue in the architectural vocabulary of the Scottish political elite, both native and colonist, until at least the mid-1200s. It also suggests that the structure at Peebles, whose external diameter was 1 metre greater than Strachan's, needs re-evaluation.

Documented evidence for continuity into the first half of the thirteenth century of a tradition where halls formed the dominant component of lordship centres is slight, yet the apparent development of stone-built 'hall castles' in the second half of the century suggests that the tradition endured.[873] There may have been a cultural and social dimension to this continuity, it being suggested for the late medieval lordship of the Isles that the large stone halls at the centres of Mhic Domhnaill power – for example, Ardtornish, Aros or Finlaggan, which contrasted with their main vassals' towers, as at the Mhic Gille Eathain castles of Duart and Breachacha – reflected 'a society which measured the status of its chief men by their generosity in entertaining'.[874] Lavish feasting and large followings demanded suitably commodious accommodation. Earlier, probably timber-built, versions of these late medieval halls were perhaps the principal element at twelfth- and thirteenth-century mainland earldom centres, such as the *rath* of Logie or Logierait in Atholl, or Aden and Kelly in Buchan, where no structural remains survive of the pre-1300 residences, and it is more than likely that similar halls stood at some older royal centres.

Another manifestation of the social symbolism of the hall form lies in its association with elite reserved pursuits, particularly hunting. The late fourteenth- and fifteenth-century timber-built hunt-halls of Robert II and James IV respectively in Strathbraan and Glen Finglas in Perthshire are the best-documented royal examples,[875] but the late twelfth-century *Nigram Aulam* or Blackhall of the Stewarts near Paisley was a hunting lodge in their baronial forest,[876] and the Giffards' hall at Strachan in Glen Feugh served their private forest.[877] With the exception of Strachan, however, no Scottish hunt-hall site has been excavated, and the upstanding buildings at Blackhall are sixteenth-century; what form these sites had in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries is a matter of conjecture. Given that hunting was so significant in the repertoire of aristocratic social activity, our poor understanding of these places of formal and informal personal interaction associated with the field sport is a critical weakness. The

hunt-hall, it can be argued, was as important an arena for the negotiation of social relationships on an informal or private basis as royal or lordly halls were on a public and formal level. While there were differences in scale and plan, it appears that halls – rectilinear and sub-circular – dominated the vocabulary of public and semi-public lordly architecture throughout the Middle Ages.

Continuity of a hall-building and hall-using tradition does not mean that it was the only architectural expression of social elevation employed by Scotland's medieval rulers, but the political, cultural and socioeconomic revolution under way in the kingdom by the late eleventh century has left no as-yet recognised physical structural manifestation. There is, however, little evidence for radical innovation in the architectural settings employed by any of Alexander II's immediate predecessors back to *c*.1100. The earliest securely dated royal building work is by Alexander I, but the evidence is paltry: fragments uncovered in recent excavations may be from a chapel recorded in his reign at Stirling Castle.[878] While it is likely that this chapel was only one component in a complex of high-status buildings in existence before 1286 close to the summit of the castle rock, no substantial or coherent structural evidence for any others has been identified.[879] Given his reputation as a state-builder, it is fitting that perhaps the most significant piece of secular building work in twelfth-century Scotland was the 'tower' built by David I at Roxburgh Castle. This structure was probably a stone donjon of the type being built in England and Normandy at this time, and it was surrounded by a complex of buildings which included the church of St John.[880] If the description of the Lady Galiene's castle, said to be based on Roxburgh, given in the *Roman de Fergus* is accurate, donjon and church still dominated the site in the early 1200s, and John Barbour's late fourteenth-century verse accounts of Sir James Douglas's capture of the castle still refers to the 'gret toure'.[881] David, with his upbringing at the English royal court, was personally familiar with such towers at London and Winchester, and his building of such a highly symbolic residence is another dimension of the continental style of lordship which he introduced into his realm. Nothing identifiable as a donjon, however, survives amongst the shattered fragments at Roxburgh, but a probably broadly similar twelfth-century keep survives at Carlisle, possibly begun by Henry I of England in 1123 and completed by David after 1136. Anoth stone donjon may have been erected at Edinburgh by David; the building known as St Margaret's Chapel has been suggested as occupying a similar relationship to it as the chapels

in the surviving twelfth-century donjons at Rochester in Kent and Bamburgh in Northumberland.[882] The cost of these donjons, however, probably meant that such towers were not erected in less-frequented residences, where earthworks and timber may have been the materials used into the reign of Alexander II.

Impermanence is often (mis-)associated with such earth-and-timber construction. The most common class of high-status residence of this form is usually seen as the motte-and-bailey castle, but this class of monument is poorly represented at royal sites. Perth's twelfth-century royal castle has been described as a motte on the basis of a fifteenth-century reference to the sweeping away of 'a certain mound' (*mons*) in a flood in 1209.[883] This *mons* has been assumed to have been the castle mound,[884] but the absence of a more specific description – for example, *mons castri* – makes this identification less certain, and recent discussion is more cautious, referring to the castle simply as being of earth and timber.[885] At Cupar, Dundee, Forfar and Elgin, the royal castles crowned rocky outcrops which had little or no need of artificial heightening, while at Berwick, Peebles, Linlithgow, Crail, Aberdeen, Banff, Forres and Inverness, the sites selected were headlands or promontories which already possessed natural defensive characteristics and where, again, construction of a motte may have been redundant.[886] The character of the royal residences at Haddington, Rutherglen, Dumfries and Ayr is uncertain. Only four twelfth-century royal castles in burghs were primarily built earthworks: Selkirk, Kintore, Cullen and Auldearn. Even these show variety of form, with Selkirk being a motte-and-bailey, while at Cullen and Auldearn they are ringworks crowning low knolls.[887] Nothing survives of Kintore, which was levelled in the eighteenth century.[888]

The absence of surviving royal financial records from earlier than 1264 prevents us from firmly identifying major episodes of new building or repair at royal residences. The first significant new building work since David I's day may only have commenced at the end of King William's reign and been completed in the first half of the reign of Alexander II at Kinclaven in Perthshire.[889] Although only unexcavated fragments survive, this castle apparently encapsulated developments in high-status residential and military architectural forms of the early 1200s. It had no donjon, its chief defence being its strong quadrangular circuit of walls. There were small, projecting towers at the angles of the enclosure, but no elaborate gatehouse like those built by the contemporary bishops of Glasgow and St Andrews

at their castles.[890] Nor was Kinclaven a building distinguished by scale, its 40 metre-square enclosure being smaller than many contemporary noblemen's castles.[891] Its main accommodation was ranged round the inner faces of the curtain wall, or free-standing within the courtyard. Circumstantial documentary references to structural components at other Scottish royal residences suggest that Kinclaven's provision probably comprised at least a hall and chamber block, kitchen and a chapel. Comparison with the slightly earlier non-royal enclosure at Castle Sween in Knapdale and the later thirteenth-century Inverlochy Castle in Lochaber might suggest that the original courtyard ranges at Kinclaven were timber-built, with elements later replaced in stone.[892] Additional accommodation was perhaps provided in the angle towers, but these were little bigger than the surviving latrine tower at the north-east angle of Balvenie castle in Moray.[893] As the one substantial early thirteenth-century royal castle which fulfilled a primarily residential function, and which survives unencumbered by post-1300 alteration or post-medieval reuse, it is a site which begs for detailed study and analysis.

Alexander was apparently responsible for another two royal castles of similar plan to Kinclaven: Tarbert in Kintyre and Kincardine in the Mearns.[894] Like Kinclaven, neither has been excavated. Work at Tarbert began in the aftermath of Alexander II's 1222 campaign in Kintyre, the castle marking the assertion of his authority in territory where previously Scottish power had been weak. The most substantial visible remains are of later work: of Alexander II's castle, only the grass-grown rubble of a quadrangular enclosure remains. No angle or gate towers are evident, but there are traces of courtyard ranges. As at Kinclaven, these may be secondary replacements of a primary largely timber-built arrangement. Kincardine is significantly smaller than either Kinclaven or Tarbert, but it is another rectangular enclosure without angle or gate towers, with a single gateway in its west wall and a compact, stone-built hall and chamber suite against the east curtain. It is believed that it was here that Alexander received the heads of his MacWilliam foes in early 1215, but it is possible that the stone castle is a 1220s' replacement for an earlier earthwork enclosure 1.5 kilometres to the north, known as Greencastle.[895] Kincardine had administrative and strategic significance as the seat of the sheriffdom of the Mearns and a control point at the southern end of an ancient route between Strathmore and Deeside, but it was primarily a residence linked to a park, the remains of which are visible as earthworks in the hills to the north of the castle, and a hunting

forest.[896]

These three castles may have been newbuilds for Alexander between 1214 and 1230. While none is sophisticated in design or quality of construction in comparison with the castles erected in England by King John or for his son Henry III from the 1220s, they do indicate that the Scottish king was expending resources on constructing impressive visual expressions of his authority. We can only wonder how Alexander may have made his mark at his most favoured residences at Forfar, Stirling and Edinburgh. What is most striking in the thirteenth-century work at Scottish royal castles, however, is that there is no evidence for the adoption of architectural forms that were developing in northern France and England. There is no apparent debt to Château Gaillard, or any other exemplar of these new forms. Instead, the simple plans of Kinclaven or Tarbert derive from an indigenous style best represented at Castle Roy on Speyside or Balvenie in Glenfiddich.[897] The poor level of survival of pre-fourteenth century secular buildings, or of documentary records for building work, may have skewed our perspective, but it is also possible that there was no significant investment in more sophisticated or large-scale projects. Given the evidence for Alexander's ready access to cash to pursue his political ambitions in England after 1220, however, poverty does not seem to have been a determining factor behind this lack of investment in the masonry expressions of lordship.

The adoption of castles by Alexander and his predecessors as a symbol of power – albeit on a small scale – was neither simultaneously nor uniformly embraced everywhere by native noblemen. Indeed the absence of evidence for motte building and, later, castle building has been commented upon: 'Scotland's ancient earldoms . . . were not places in which to find the up-to-date apparatus of a 'Norman' or 'feudal' lord.'[898] Given that the 'native' earls did not lose their socio-political leadership role in the core of the kingdom in the face of the colonists, Fiona Watson concluded that the failure to adopt these new expressions was a statement of cultural self-confidence on the part of a traditional nobility, who did not lack 'the *ability*, in terms of status and landed resources, to "modernise" their residences [but] had no *inclination* to do so'.[899] This attitude may be true of the later twelfth and thirteenth centuries, once the earls had accrued the landed resources and revenue that secured them a permanent position at the head of noble society in the kingdom, but in an earlier time it is quite likely that they indeed lacked the ability to

fund construction of such buildings, even if they had possessed the inclination.

A similar situation has been posited for Gaelic Ireland. There a few significant sites bear close comparison with the thirteenth-century enclosure castles of the Scottish western Highlands and Hebrides, but most of the indigenous royal and lordly families continued to build and occupy traditional power centres, such as crannogs.[900] In Ireland, too, it is suggested that native legal practices involving inheritance of landed property and succession to lordly power slowed the adoption of the castle as an expression of status, at least until the development of the economic resources controlled by Gaelic Irish lineages in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[901] In Strathearn, however, even once the earls had gained heritable possession of sufficient land, rents and jurisdictional rights to secure their social status and attendant economic dominance, they, their kinsmen and tenants adhered to traditional expressions of lordly power, as in their residence on the crannog of 'leyle de Kenmer' (Island of Kenmore), probably Neish's Island at St Fillans at the east end of Loch Earn or Eilean Craggan at its western end.[902] What needs recognition, however, is that the vision of sites like the Loch Earn crannog as functioning in essentially the same manner as a castle represents the backwards projection of a dimension of a style of lordship that only emerged in Gaelic Scotland in the later twelfth century. In most of the other Gaelic earldoms there was, likewise, a lack of either inclination or financial ability to build new residences in motte, ringwork or early stone form before the end of Alexander II's reign. Even for the most enthusiastically pro-Frankish of the Gaelic nobility, the earls of Fife, that enthusiasm did not extend to castle building: the architectural details of the scanty remains of their castle at Falkland suggest its construction began only in the 1260s. Only in Mar, whose earls married into the royal family's de Warenne kin, were the motte and early stone enclosure castle adopted before 1200 as visual expressions of lordly power. The Mars' platform motte of the Doune of Invernochty, crowned by an oval shell keep-like enclosure, is otherwise paralleled at 'native' lordship centres only by their Durward kinsmen's early thirteenth-century shell keep at Urquhart by Loch Ness.[903] It is difficult to escape the conclusion that the absence of the adoption of a style of building which signalled the social separation of the earls from the wider Gaelic ministerial class and their elevation to form a top stratum in a socio-political hierarchy was a consequence of the originally limited economic standing of such men and the

primarily administrative function they performed.

Although the native earls continued to adhere to traditional forms of residence, new architectural forms and expressions of lordship were emerging elsewhere in Scotland. It is probably significant that the builders of these structures were mostly men of colonist background who held their estates by 'feudal' tenures and commanded the economic and jurisdictional power to provide themselves with an unmistakeable symbol of their enhanced lordship. By *c*.1200, stone-built castles, or stone components added to earlier earthworks, had begun to be included in the repertoire of architectural forms employed by the new noble classes. At Glasgow and St Andrews, the bishops incorporated stone halls and gatehouses into the earthen ringworks and enclosures of their predecessors' residences,[904] but elsewhere wholly stone-built structures were also being erected. At Aberdour in Fife, for example, William de Mortimer appears to have constructed a free-standing stone keep of at least two storeys as the centrepiece of his residence by *c*.1200, while at Panmure in Angus the de Valognes family seems to have possessed a large stone-built enclosure castle by a similar date.[905] In neither case has the dating been tested by modern excavation, the earliest phases evident at both having been interpreted principally through the subjective dating of architectural features such as clasping buttresses or masonry styles.

While the possibly early examples of stonework castles at Aberdour or Panmure perhaps drew their main influences directly from England, a free-standing stone tower tradition that emerged in Caithness and Orkney in the early thirteenth century drew its inspiration from Scandinavian contacts with the European mainland. The dating of the simple stone towers which survive in Caithness at Castle of Old Wick and Braal is fraught with difficulties, but the stylistically identical structure at Cubbie Roo's Castle on the Orkney island of Wyre represents the remains of the 'fine stone castle' built there in the second half of the twelfth century by Kolbein Hruga.[906] Scandinavian-filtered European influence, too, may lie behind the stone-and-mortar building tradition which developed in the western mainland and Hebrides. This is represented by castles like Sween in Knapdale, whose quadrangular enclosure has been dated to *c*.1200; or Urquhart, where the Durwards' shell keep has been described as a hybrid, sharing features in common with the indigenous tradition of stone circuits on rock outcrops,[907] such as Tioram in Moidart, where the irregular stone enclosure is regarded traditionally as the work of Sumarliði's Mhic

Ruaidhri descendents.[908] Here, the relationship between these buildings and the ancient indigenous tradition of drystone fortification represented by the dun is a subject crying out for detailed research.

At several locations in the western mainland and Hebrides it is apparent that there is either continuity of occupation from the Early Historic period into the later Middle Ages and beyond, or medieval reoccupation of abandoned late Prehistoric structures.[909] At Dun Ringill and Rubha an Dunan in Skye, Iron Age duns on coastal promontories were reused as fortified residences by the chiefs of the Mhic Fhionghuin and Mhic Asgaill respectively. Both sites saw the refurbishment of the old defensive circuits and insertion of new buildings within the enclosures.[910] These structures represent continuity of an indigenous tradition in high-status residence rather than adoption of the cultural icons of continental lordship that were being imported into southern and eastern Scotland. Elsewhere, however, there is evidence for the construction of fortifications of the new type at older defensive sites. At Dun Lagaidh in Wester Ross, for example, a small mortared stone keep and enclosure was inserted into the remains of a late Iron Age dun and hillfort in the late twelfth or early thirteenth century.[911] But the process of transformation from Early Historic Gaelic dun into medieval castle is not well understood, and there has been no other modern excavation of post-twelfth century structures which occupy earlier sites to determine whether these represent the remodelling of traditional fortifications by resident lords, or the reoccupation of derelict sites by newcomers.

It is a commonly held view that a switch to construction in stone as the favoured building material in lordly residences in southern and eastern mainland Scotland during the thirteenth century is a sign of increasing sophistication and was principally the work of members of the colonial nobility. Certainly, some of the greatest of the stone castles to survive from the pre-Wars of Independence era – for example, Bothwell or Dirleton – were the later thirteenth-century products of families who settled in Scotland in the course of the twelfth century, but the greater number of such buildings are the work of Gaelic and Scandinavian lords operating in regions that have traditionally been perceived as marginal to the zone of greatest 'Anglo-Norman' cultural influence. Whilst much has been made of the evidence for an embracing of alien culture by families like the Mhic Dubhghaill in the thirteenth century,[912] their residences at Dunstaffnage, Mingary or Tioram do not derive from a mainstream

European tradition. In the northern and western Highlands and Islands, a stone-building tradition was already deeply entrenched in prehistory, and the development of castle building, although shaped by influences from elsewhere in mainland Britain, may have been a phenomenon driven as much by ancestral traditions, and factors such as availability of materials, as by fashion. The superiority of stone over timber as the material for lordly buildings is, moreover, largely a post-medieval perception influenced by the poor survival of medieval timberwork in Scotland. Excavations at Castle Sween in Knapdale, believed to be the oldest stone-built castle in mainland Scotland, revealed that there were no 'permanent' buildings within the stone-built enclosure before the late 1200s.[913] The excavators' suggestion that this situation was the result of an unfinished or interrupted building programme indicates how pernicious a hold the view of timber's replacement by stone as the material of choice for lordly architecture perhaps has in Scottish archaeology. That the first-phase 'permanent' internal structures at Castle Sween were timber-built by choice seems never to have been considered, yet at a number of other major Scottish stone enclosure castles of the mid- and later thirteenth century the evidence points strongly towards that arrangement.

At Rothesay in Bute, the majority of the structures arranged round the inner face of the sub-circular stone enclosure appear to have remained timber-built throughout the Middle Ages, and excavations at the castles of Dunstaffnage in Lorn and Inverlochy in Lochaber suggest that timber was probably the principal material used at both in the construction of the buildings originally ranged round the courtyard faces of the stone enclosures.[914] But entirely timber-built high-status residences also remained present in Scotland long after the date when stone had supposedly displaced it as the building material of choice for the higher nobility. For the Giffards at Strachan in the thirteenth century, or the Gordons at Huntly as late as the 1450s, wood was an entirely acceptable material expression of their aristocratic status. We should surely be unsurprised, therefore, by such use of stone and timber together in the castles constructed by some of the greatest noble families of later medieval Scotland, for, as the work of Higham and Barker has highlighted, even the kings of England were content to employ timber for some of the principal apartments at their castles into at least the later fourteenth century.[915]

Conclusion

Few of the men gathered around the bed of the dying Alexander II on Kerrera in July 1249 would have had any awareness of the wider historical significance of his passing. We have no record of how or what they felt and thought about the death of a ruler whose reign had spanned most of their lifetimes; personal grief may have jostled with awareness of opportunities and possibilities in the minds of some, while others may have harboured straightforward fear of the unknown after the long certainty of Alexander's grip on his realm. The fifty-year-old king was a personal link to an already fading past that many would have heard of but which few had actually experienced themselves; they knew, however, that they needed to be swift and decisive in making the new king and in staking their individual claims to a place in the future government of the kingdom. And so they hurried east for the inauguration of the boy Alexander III at Scone just five days after his father's death, and soon fell to bickering over the rite and process of king-making and how power would be exercised during what would inevitably be a long minority; but in truth there was actually no urgency to invest the new monarch with his powers beyond maintenance of the notional legal stability of the peace of the living king throughout his realm.

That absence of political necessity for a speedy king-making was perhaps Alexander II's single greatest achievement: for the first time in its history, this royal lineage descended from Malcolm III and Margaret through their youngest son David I faced no challenge to its kingship. There was no insurrection in support of an alternative royal claimant, no rebellion hatched amongst the fractious inhabitants of the territories over which the young Alexander's ancestors had claimed lordship but which only his father had succeeded in making real, and no threat to the security of the kingdom from opportunist neighbours. Although Alexander II left much business unfinished, especially in the redefinition of political relationships in the west of the kingdom and in its international relationships with Norway and its vassal kingdom in the Isles, he had elevated Scottish kingship and the stability of the realm to an unprecedented level, from which there would be no retreat.

The scale of Alexander's achievements should never be underestimated. He had received a difficult and threatened inheritance over which title had been secured only through

inauguration before his father's corpse was cold. Post facto knowledge of the elimination of the rival claims to his kingship which he carried out with ruthless efficiency by 1230 has blinded us in the past to the reality and potency of the challenges which he and his lineage faced to the legitimacy of their rule. Yes, by the early thirteenth century Alexander's immediate family had secured a tight grip on what was emerging rapidly as the political and economic heartland of Scotland, and therefore possessed the resources to overcome rivals who had been pushed into the less well-resourced geographical margins, but it was Alexander who used that control as a platform from which to realise the final domination of all mainland Scotland. Neither David I nor William at the height of their powers had been able to achieve that level of control.

What drove Alexander in pursuit of his ideal of a higher style of kingship and an expanded and stable kingdom? It would be easy just to dismiss those objectives as the ambitions of any medieval monarch, but in Alexander there is a very real sense of a driven determination, tempered by a pragmatism that bordered on the clinical. Insecurity appears to have been a powerful motivation behind many of his actions: insecurity over his status, and insecurity over his legacy. That insecurity drove forward many of his policies – and yes, we can talk of policies, for they emerge as consistent components within his exercise of government and in the routine functioning of his administration – especially those which revolved around succession and inheritance. It is no accident that it was in Alexander's reign that the canon law definition of legitimacy and illegitimacy began to be imposed rigorously in the descent of property titles and was deployed as a weapon in the propaganda war unleashed against his dynastic rivals. Dismissal of his distant MacWilliam cousins as illegitimate through multiple generations was the medieval equivalent of the nuclear option, utterly discrediting what was without question the senior line of the ruling house, and aligning the full panoply of the Church against them. The converse, of course, was the legitimacy of his kingship and the divine sanction which that gave him to rule: *Deo rectore Rex Scottorum* (King of Scots under God's governance), indeed, as his seal proclaimed.

Claims of right were one thing, but establishing that right was another, and it was here that Alexander displayed utter ruthlessness in removing all challenges to his position and to that of his as-yet unborn heirs. The brutality of the 'closure' which he brought to the long

MacWilliam challenge is shocking to modern sensibilities, but we should not accept it as a simple reflection of the brutality of the age; contemporaries were equally shocked by the cold dispensation of 'justice' in the public execution of the nameless last child of the MacWilliam line. Contemporaries, however, may also have understood a degree of cruel necessity in the act, for the extinction of the MacWilliam line ended over a century of challenges to Scotland's kings which had convulsed their realm and weakened them in the face of external threats. Later medieval kings may well have recognised the display of *raddure* (severity or harshness in the exercise of power) which this act represented and the necessity that drove it, and agreed with the speedy and bloody dispensation of justice which Alexander visited on others who challenged his authority (such as the slayers of Bishop Adam in 1222). It may not have made him better loved by his subjects, but it certainly gave them pause for thought and awoke many to the new realities of power in a Scotland where the king's reach had extended to unprecedented levels.

The ambition for his kingship and the emphasis on his right, which was expressed in the destruction of the MacWilliams or the mutilations dispensed on the Caithness-men, are writ equally large in his conduct of business with England. Inherited right, both notional and real, drove many of his actions from the opening weeks of his reign through to the successive negotiated settlements at York and Newcastle which redefined the relationship between the kingdoms. Alexander's inherited claims to the northern counties of England were a central element in his entry into the civil war between King John and the English barons, but his involvement in that conflict also revolved around the issue of his own and his sisters' marriages, the outcome of which would have immense bearing on the perceived degree of royalty of his family. Although the marriage to Henry III's sister which Alexander eventually secured for himself failed to deliver either the hoped-for heir or the satisfactory resolution of Scottish territorial claims to Northumberland and English Cumbria, it provided an immense boost to the prestige of the Scottish king personally and to his ambitions for his kingly status. That he had been recognised as a suitable husband for an English royal princess probably fuelled his greater ambitions to secure the same degree of royalty for himself and his heirs as was held by English kings. Alexander's anxiety over the difference in degree between himself and his brother-in-law was not a case of idle fear, for as Henry III and his government's continual stressing of the inferiority of the king of Scots and vassal status vis-à-

vis the kings of England in their papal diplomacy demonstrated, it was a stick with which he was to be regularly beaten. Although he failed to secure the coronation and unction that would have removed any taint of inferiority from Scottish kingship, he, his councillors and representatives succeeded in articulating a vision of his royal status which provided the basis for the later defences of Scottish kingship advanced internationally during the crisis years between 1296 and 1327. For that success alone Alexander is to be celebrated.

How, then, in the final appraisal do we rate Alexander II? An opportunist to the very end, he capitalised on others' weaknesses and generally succeeded in turning even his own failures into future opportunities. That same opportunism threatened catastrophe on occasion, especially in the opening years of his reign when it was coupled with a youthful impetuosity and single-mindedness which pitched him against insuperable odds. It was perhaps sheer blind luck which saved him from a worse outcome in his adventures in England in 1215–17, coupled with the fact that a legitimate grievance was recognised as underlying his actions. Not even the most hostile of English commentators denied that he held unanswered claims against King John; what was questionable was the manner in which he chose to exploit others' weaknesses in an effort to secure more than he was entitled to. Even in defeat in 1217–18, Alexander was able to secure concessions that there was justice in his actions during the war, and that his still-outstanding claims and grievances required to be addressed once Henry III was of age to take responsibility for his own government. And here Alexander displayed great ability, learning from his failures and using the slim concessions gained to construct a wider platform from which to push his case when opportunity again arose. It won him a royal marriage in 1220 and a substantial pay-off in 1237. So, patience and perseverance can be added to the ruthlessness and opportunism he displayed in his domestic and international political affairs, and the ambition for himself and his kingship which drove his actions. Through a combination of these double-edged traits, Alexander achieved one of the greatest advances in the power and authority of the Scottish monarchy since the days of David I. By force of personality and the judicious use of terror and violence, he welded together a kingdom that had still been ill-defined and loosely bound at the outset of his reign but which he left as a united entity. Death on Kerrera may have robbed him of the final victory which carried Scottish royal authority to the farthest limits of the Scottish mainland, but it was his consistent effort to strengthen the

powers of Scottish kingship, and to eliminate all challenge to his status as king over the whole of the geographical notion that was Scotland, which delivered that ultimate prize to his son. It was Alexander II's achievement to turn the kingship of the Scots into a kingship of Scotland. He was, indeed, 'a great prince and very greedy of this world's honour'.

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114. Ibid. The allusion to Alexander's hair colour and immaturity is repeated in Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, ed. H R Luard, 7 vols (London, 1872–84), vol. 2, 641–2: 'He taunted King Alexander, and because he was red-haired sent word to him, saying, "so we shall hunt the red fox-cub from his lairs".'

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124. *Chron. Fordun*, vol. 1, 284; Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 82–5 offers a more detailed narrative but still clearly based on the same sources as Fordun.

125. Stringer, 'War of 1215–17', 122–3.

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132. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1216.

133. Duncan, *Making of the Kingdom*, 523.

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135. This date is suggested by the *Chronicle of the Canons of Huntingdon*, 213, but assigned to 1217 rather than 1216.

136. For his significance in the defence of the north-east for John, see Stringer, 'War of 1215–17', 145–6.

137. Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*, vol. 2, 191.

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139. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1216; *Histoire des Ducs de Normandie*, 179; Walter of Coventry, *Memoriale*, vol. 2, 230, 232–3; Stringer, 'War of 1215–17', 128.

140. *Histoire des Ducs de Normandie*, 179.

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147. Stringer, 'War of 1215–17', 129.

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150. Stringer, 'War of 1215–17', 132.

151. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1167.

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153. For a discussion of the wider impact of papal policies in Anglo-Scottish affairs, see pp. 192–203 below.

154. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1215.

155. Ibid.; Stringer, 'War of 1215–17', 149.

156. P C Ferguson, *Medieval Papal Representatives in Scotland: Legates, Nuncios and Judges-Delegate, 1125–1286*, Stair Society (Series), 45 (Edinburgh, 1997), 76–81.

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164. Stringer, 'Periphery and core', 89–92; Oram, *Lordship of Galloway*, 120.

165. Stringer, 'Periphery and core', 90–1.

166. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1217.

167. Ibid.

168. Ibid.; Duncan, *Making of the Kingdom*, 524.

169. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1217.

170. Ibid.

171. Ibid.

172. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 673.

173. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1217.

174. Stringer, 'War of 1215–17', 135–6.

175. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1217.

176. Duncan, *Making of the Kingdom*, 525.

177. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1216.

178. Stringer, 'War of 1215–17', 138–46.

179. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 679.

180. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 686.

181. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 692.

182. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1217.

183. The following account of the activities of Guala's agents and the Cistercian response is based largely on *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1218.

184. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 97.

185. Duncan, *Making of the Kingdom*, 525; Ferguson, *Medieval Papal Representatives*, 81; Stringer, 'War of 1215–17', 148 and n.187.

186. Guala and his representatives were accused of having enriched themselves through the fines imposed on the clergy who had supported the rebellion against John or who defied the interdict. See *Letters of Guala*, xlii. A very hostile contemporary account, probably derived from a chronicle composed at St Andrews by or for Bishop William Malveisin and incorporated into Walter Bower's fifteenth-century *Scotichronicon*, provides detail of the extent of the financial exactions in Scotland (Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 97–101).

187. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 97.

188. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1218.

189. *Letters of Guala*, no. 131.

190. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1218; *Calendar of Entries in the Papal Registers Relating to Britain and Ireland: Papal Letters* [*CPL*], ed. W H Bliss and others (London, 1893–present), vol. 1, 55; Theiner (ed.), *Vetera Monumenta*, no. 14.

191. *Letters of Guala*, no. 131, notes; Theiner (ed.), *Vetera Monumenta*, no. 16.

192. Barrell, 'Scotland and the papacy', 160.

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195. D A Carpenter, *The Minority of Henry III* (London, 1990), 133.

196. E L G Stones (ed. and trans.), *Anglo-Scottish Relations, 1174–1328* (Oxford, 1965), no. 5.

197. See, for example, Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 101 ('Guala, who had become entirely English in outlook . . .').

198. *CDS*, vol. 5, no. 1.

199. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 716.

200. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 717, 718, 721.

201. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 722.

202. *Chron. Fordun*, s.a. 1219.

203. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 686, 692.

204. Stringer, *Earl David*, 115–17; Carpenter, *Minority*, 148–9.

205. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 724.

206. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 735, 736.

207. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 731; Carpenter, *Minority*, 158–9.

208. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 732.

209. Carpenter, *Minority*, 152.

210. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 734.

211. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 739, 740.

212. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 755, 756.

213. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 758; CDS, vol. 5, no. 3.

214. Carpenter, *Minority*, 155, 193.

215. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 760.

216. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 760, 761; Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*, vol. 2, 253.

217. Duncan, *Making of the Kingdom*, 247.

218. Anderson (ed.), *Scottish Annals*, 335.

219. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 767.

220. Duncan, *Making of the Kingdom*, 246–7.

221. Carpenter, *Minority*, 198–9.

222. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 774. The safe-conduct was to expire on 18 November.

223. Carpenter, *Minority*, 217.

224. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 776.

225. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 778, 783; *CDS*, vol. 5, no. 5.

226. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 777; *CDS*, vol. 5, no. 4.

227. Carpenter, *Minority*, 220.

228. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 781. For discussion of the legation of Master James, see Ferguson, *Medieval Papal Representatives*, 85–9.

229. Duncan, *Kingship of the Scots*, 118–119.

230. Ferguson, *Medieval Papal Representatives*, 86.

231. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 783.

232. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 786.

233. Carpenter, *Minority*, 230.

234. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 786.

235. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1221.

236. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 797.

237. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 799.

238. *Concilia Scotiae: Ecclesiae Scoticanae Statuta tam Provinvialia quam Synodalia quae Supersunt, 1225–1559: Statuta Ecclesiae Scoticana* [Robertson, *Concilia*], ed. J Robertson, 2 vols (Bannatyne Club, 1866), xlv, no. 2; A A M Duncan, *The Kingship of the Scots 842–1292: Succession and Independence* (Edinburgh, 2002), 119; Ferguson, *Medieval Papal Representatives*, 87–8. The reply is placed amongst a group of letters issued at the Lateran in June 1221. If that dating is correct, then it is likely that the legate's letter to the pope had been sent in February/March.

239. Duncan, *Kingship of the Scots*, 119.

240. For the dates of Master James's legation, see Ferguson, *Medieval Papal Representatives*, 86.

241. Carpenter, *Minority*, 239–52.

242. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 801.

243. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 802, 803.

244. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 805, 806.

245. Carpenter, *Minority*, 245.

246. For Margaret's marriage in June 1221, see Matthew Paris, *Chron. Majora*, vol. 3, 67; for the later dates, see *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1221; Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 107.

247. Carpenter, *Minority*, 245–6 and n.12.

248. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 808.

249. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1221.

250. Oram, *Domination and Lordship*, 157–8, 174, 176, 190–1; R A McDonald, *Outlaws of Medieval Scotland: Challenges to the Canmore Kings, 1058–1266* (East Linton, 2003).

251. Broun, 'Contemporary perspectives', 83; S Duffy, 'The Bruce brothers and the Irish Sea world', reprinted in S Duffy (ed.), *Robert the Bruce's Irish Wars* (Stroud, 2002), 63.

252. Benedict of Peterborough, *Gesta Regis*, vol. 1, 7–8.

253. Broun, 'Contemporary perspectives', 82–4, 86–8, 93–7.

254. Duncan, *Making of the Kingdom*, 197.

255. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1215.

256. Oram, *Lordship of Galloway*, 117; Stringer, 'Periphery and core', 88.

257. Oram, *Domination and Lordship*, 166–7.

258. *Registrum Episcopatus Moraviensis* [*Moray Register*] (Bannatyne Club, 1847), no. 1; *RRS*, vol. 2, no. 520.

259. Grant, 'Province of Ross', 110–22.

260. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1179. For reference to castle-works in Ross, see *RRS*, vol. 2, no. 500.

261. Grant, 'Province of Ross', 111, 124; G W S Barrow, 'Badenoch and Strathspey, 1130–1312, I', *Northern Scotland*, 8 (1988), 4–7; Oram, 'Introduction and overview', 36.

262. See, for example, Oram, *David I*, 93–102.

263. *APS*, vol. 1, 398, c.II.

264. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 808.

265. See *Chron. Man*, s.a. 1237–8.

266. *Chron. Fordun*, vol. 1, s.a. 1221; Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 105–7. For discussion of the campaign and debate over whether events assigned to 1221 and 1222 should in fact all be attributed to the earlier year, see J G Dunbar and A A M Duncan, 'Tarbert Castle: A contribution to the history of Argyll', *Scottish Historical Review*, 50 (1971), 2–3.

267. *Registrum Sancte Marie de Neubotle* [*Newbattle Register*] (Bannatyne Club, 1849), no. 27.

268. *Moray Register*, no. 52.

269. R D Oram, *The Lordship of Galloway* (Edinburgh, 2000), 117–9.

270. *Annals of Loch Cé* [*ALC*], s.a. 1221, available online at: .

271. S Duffy, *Ireland in the Middle Ages* (Basingstoke, 1997), 118–19.

272. N Murray, 'Swerving from the path of justice: Alexander II's relations with Argyll and the Western Isles, 1214–1249', in Oram (ed.), *Reign of Alexander II*, 290–91; Dunbar and Duncan, 'Tarbert Castle', 2; A A M Duncan and A L Brown, 'Argyll and the Isles in the Earlier Middle Ages', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 90 (1959), 199–200.

273. *Annals of Ulster* [*AU*], s.a. 1212, 1214, availableonline at: .

274. *Registrum Magni Sigilli Regum Scotorum* [*RMS*], ed. J M Thomson and others (Edinburgh, 1882–1914), vol. 2, no. 3136.

275. A Woolf, 'A dead man at Ballyshannon', in S Duffy (ed.), *The World of the Gallowglass: Kings, Warlords and Warriors in Ireland and Scotland, 1200–1600* (Dublin, 2007), 81.

276. *Chronica Regum Manniae et Insularum. The Chronicle of Man and the Isles. A Facsimile of the Manuscript Codex Julius A. VIII in the British Museum* [*Chron. Man*] (Douglas, 1944), s.a.1210.

277. Wolf, 'A dead man at Ballyshannon', 81.

278. *Chron. Fordun*, vol. 1, s.a. 1222; Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 107.

279. NLS Adv MS 35.4.12A, no. 3.

280. *Liber Sancte Marie de Calchou* [*Kelso Liber*] (Bannatyne Club, 1846), no. 183.

281. *RMS*, vol. 7, no. 190 (1); Dunbar and Duncan, 'Tarbert Castle', 2–3; E P Dennison, 'Burghs and burgesses: A time of consolidation?', in Oram (ed.), *Reign of Alexander II*, 275–8.

282. *Registrum Monasterii de Passelet* [*Paisley Register*] (Maitland Club, 1832), 132–3.

283. Dunbar and Duncan, 'Tarbert Castle', 13; RCAHMS, *Argyll: An Inventory of the Monuments*, vol. 1, *Kintyre* (Edinburgh, 1971), no. 316.

284. Murray, 'Swerving from the path of justice', 291.

285. *Paisley Register*, 216–7.

286. W D H Sellar, 'Hebridean sea kings: The successors of Somerled, 1164–1316', in E J Cowan and R A McDonald (eds), *Alba: Celtic Scotland in the Middle Ages* (East Linton, 2000), 201.

287. Theiner (ed.), *Vetera Monumenta*, no. 29; *CPL*, vol. 1, 89.

288. Anderson (ed.), *Scottish Annals*, 336–7.

289. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 831.

290. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 115.

291. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1213, 1214.

292. He was consecrated on 11 May, and on 29 May he was still close to his former abbey, consecrating the parish church of Hawick: *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1214.

293. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1218.

294. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1222.

295. *Chron. Fordun*, vol. 1, s.a. 1222; Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 115; A A M Duncan, 'Sources and uses of the Chronicle of Melrose', in S Taylor (ed.), *Kings, Clerics and Chronicles in Scotland* (Dublin, 2000),

168.

296. Anderson (ed.), *Scottish Annals*, 337.

297. *Chron. Fordun*, vol. 1, s.a. 1222; Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 115; Anderson (ed.), *Scottish Annals*, 337; Theiner (ed.), *Vetera Monumenta*, no. 49.

298. *Chron. Fordun*, vol. 1, s.a. 1222; Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 115.

299. Anderson (ed.), *Scottish Annals*, 337.

300. Theiner (ed.), *Vetera Monumenta*, no. 49.

301. A O Anderson (ed.), *Early Sources of Scottish History AD 500–1286*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1922), vol. 2, 451–2.

302. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 115.

303. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 115; J Raine, *The History and Antiquities of North Durham* (London, 1852), no. 64; NLS Adv MS 34.1.10, ii, 266.

304. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 117. *Gesta Annalia* states that the meeting occurred during the king's birthday celebrations (24 August).

305. *Chron. Fordun*, vol. 1, s.a. 1223.

306. *Registrum Episcopatus Glasguensis* [*Glasgow Register*] (Bannatyne and Maitland Clubs, 1843), nos 118, 119; *RMS*, vol. 1, no. 262. He was back in Lothian by 19 May, when he issued a charter at Newbattle: *Glasgow Register*, no. 128.

307. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 852.

308. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 855, 856; Anderson (ed.), *Scottish Annals*, 338.

309. *Bower, Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 117.

310. R A McDonald, *The Kingdom of the Isles: Scotland's Western Seaboard, c 1100–c 1336* (East Linton, 1997), 82; Woolf, 'A dead man at Ballyshannon', 80; A Ross, 'Moray, Ulster and the MacWilliams', in Duffy (ed.), *World of the Gallowglass*, 40–1.

311. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 143, 145,

312. *Chronicon de Lanercost* [*Chron. Lanercost*](Maitland Club, 1839), s.a. 1230.

313. The suggestion in the editorial notes to Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 245 to the effect that Gillescop MacWilliam had been in the king's hands and subject to his justice is wrong. For discussion of this second Gillescop, see Duncan, *Making of the Kingdom*, 529.

314. Oram, *Domination and Lordship*, 156, 169.

315. *CDS*, vol. 5, no. 9.

316. The following narrative is based on *Chron. Man*, folios 42, 43. The dating of events within this section of the text is imprecise but fall into a range between *c*.1188 and 1226.

317. Oram, *Domination and Lordship*, 169.

318. Carpenter, *Minority*, 306–7.

319. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 857.

320. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 890.

321. *AU*, s.a. 1222; T E McNeill, *Anglo-Norman Ulster: The History and Archaeology of an Irish Barony, 1177–1400* (Edinburgh, 1980), 18.

322. Carpenter, *Minority*, 354–5, 370.

323. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 890, 891.

324. Grant, 'Province of Ross', 122 and n.167; R A McDonald, 'Treachery in the remotest territories of Scotland: northern resistance to the Canmore dynasty, 1130–1230', *Canadian Journal of History*, 33 (1999), 184–5.

325. *Chron. Man*, circa 1224.

326. Oram, *Lordship of Galloway*, 125–6.

327. *Moray Register*, no. 29.

328. *CDS*, vol. 5, no. 9.

329. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1001.

330. *Chron. Man*, s.a. 1228.

331. Oram, *Lordship of Galloway*, 123–4.

332. *Chron. Man*, s.a. 1228.

333. Ibid.

334. *Chron. Fordun*, vol. 2, 285–6; Duncan, *Kingship of the Scots*, 117.

335. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 143. For Thomas as lord of Abertarff in 1225, see *Moray Register*, no. 28. Bower's source appears to be shared by the later thirteenth-century Chronicle of Lanercost, which uses similar language to narrate the end of the MacWilliam challenge in 1230.

336. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 145.

337. *Moray Register*, no. 109; *Paisley Register*, 172; *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1113.

338. *Liber Ecclesie de Scon* [*Scone Liber*] (Bannatyne Club, 1843), no. 69.

339. *Chron. Lanercost*, s.a. 1230.

340. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 117, 143.

341. Sellar, 'Hebridean sea kings', 200–1; Woolf, 'A dead man at Ballyshannon', 79–80, 84–5.

342. Anderson (ed.), *Early Sources*, vol. 2, 464–5.

343. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 143.

344. Oram, *Domination and Lordship*, 191.

345. *Chron. Lanercost*, s.a. 1230. The order of events in the year entry for 1230 places this act earlier than the Norwegian campaign that sailed south through the Hebrides in late summer 1230.

346. NLS Adv MS 34.1.10, ii, 283–4. Contrary to what I suggested in *Lordship of Galloway*, 129, the northern crisis was apparently ended several months before a fresh crisis erupted in the Isles.

347. See especially Stringer, 'Periphery and core'.

348. I Beuermann, 'Masters of the narrow sea: Forgotten challenges to Norwegian rule in Man and the Isles, 1079–1266', PhD Thesis, University of Oslo, 2007, 332. For discussion of Uspak's background, see Sellar, 'Hebridean sea kings', 202.

349. Anderson (ed.), *Early Sources*, vol. 2, 473.

350. *Chron. Lanercost*, s.a. 1230; *Annals of Dunstable*, s.a. 1231 in *Annales Monastici*, ed. H R Luard, 5 volumes (London, 1864–69).

351. Anderson (ed.), *Early Sources*, vol. 2, 474–5.

352. Murray, 'Swerving from the path of justice', 296–7.

353. *Paisley Register*, 48.

354. Anderson (ed.), *Early Sources*, vol. 2, 476.

355. Anderson (ed.), *Early Sources*, vol. 2, 476–7; *Chron. Man, c.*1230–1231.

356. *Kelso Liber*, no. 185.

357. Anderson (ed.), *Early Sources*, vol. 2, 477; *Chron. Man, c.*1230–1231.

358. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 145.

359. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 259; Duncan, *Making of the Kingdom*, 529.

360. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 145; S R Macphail, *History of the Religious House of Pluscardyn* (Edinburgh, 1881), 62–3, 69–73; Oram, 'Introduction and overview', 43.

361. Stringer, 'Periphery and core', 97; Murray, 'Swerving from the

path of justice', 298–9.

362. *Arbroath Liber*, no. 134.

363. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 145 and note on 259.

364. *Liber Sancte Marie de Balmorinach* [*Balmerino Liber*] (Abbotsford, 1844), no. 1.

365. Sellar, 'Hebridean sea kings', 202–3; *Bower, Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 145.

366. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 261–3.

367. *Melrose Liber*, no. 175 (Melrose, 19 March 1231); Raine, *North Durham*, no. 67 (Roxburgh, 29 March 1231); *RMS*, vol. 2, no. 1791 (Edinburgh, 30 June 1231); W Fraser (ed.), *The Lennox* (Edinburgh, 1874), vol. 2, no. 5 (Linlithgow, 6 Sept 1231).

368. Anderson (ed.), *Early Sources*, vol. 2, 477.

369. *Chron. Lanercost*, s.a. 1230; *Chron. Man*, s.a. 1230.

370. Anderson (ed.), *Early Sources*, vol. 2, 480–3. This discussion wholly replaces that given in Oram, 'Introduction and overview', 39–40, which wrongly placed these events in 1230.

371. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1231.

372. Anderson (ed.), *Early Sources*, vol. 2, 474.

373. B E Crawford, 'The earldom of Caithness and the kingdom of Scotland, 1150–1266', in K J Stringer (ed.), *Essays on the Nobility of Medieval Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1985), 33–9.

374. *Chron. Lanercost*, s.a. 1235; *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1234.

375. Oram, *Lordship of Galloway*, 126, 141.

376. For the marriage of Dervorguilla, see *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1233, and for Helen and Christiana see *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1234; Oram, *Lordship of Galloway*, 141–3.

377. For articulation of the view that Patrick was the favoured candidate of the Galwegians, see Matthew Paris, *Chron. Majora*, vol. 3, s.a 1236; Oram, *Lordship of Galloway*, 143.

378. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1231; Oram, *Lordship of Galloway*, 142. For discussion of Patrick and Alan 'son of the earl', see pp. 168–9 below.

379. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1234.

380. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 147.

381. Matthew Paris, *Chron. Majora*, vol. 3, s.a. 1236; *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1234.

382. *Moray Register*, no. 36 (Edinburgh, 21 April); *Scone Liber*, nos 67,

71 (Traquair, 1 June); Historic Manuscripts Commission, *Supplementary Report on the Manuscripts of the Earl of Mar and Kellie* (London, 1930), no. 1 (Haddington, 15 June). The presence of a number of lords with southern Lanarkshire and eastern Dumfriesshire interests at Haddington might indicate that Alexander was receiving intelligence of events in the south-west and was preparing to intervene.

383. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1235; *Registrum Honoris de Morton* [*Morton Register*] (Bannatyne Club, 1853), appendix, no. 3. An earlier start to the campaign would ease the problem of the tightness of operations between Melrose's date of 15 July for the start of the invasion and 1 August, when Alexander was in Berwick. See Duncan, *Making of the Kingdom*, 531.

384. Alexander's younger sister, like his elder sister, was named Margaret. Here she is referred to as Margery to avoid confusion. See also chapter 5, n.1.

385. Alexander's younger sister was named Margaret, which has arisen to much confusion with the eldest of the three sisters: see, Duncan, *Making of the Kingdom*, 527. To avoid confusion here, she is referred to as Margery, using the modern English name form derived from the French pronunciation of Margaret.

386. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1221.

387. Matthew Paris, *Chron. Majora*, vol. 3, 222.

388. Carpenter, *Minority*, 245–6.

389. It has been suggested that Hubert was given possession of Fotheringhay by Alexander during the minority of John, son of Earl David of Huntingdon, as part of the pre-marriage negotiations concerning Margaret; see R C Stacey, *Politics, Policy and Finance under Henry III 1216–1245* (Oxford, 1987), 21–3.

390. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 131 and notes on 250.

391. *Royal and Other Historical Letters Illustrative of the Reign of Henry III*, ed. W W Shirley (London, 1862), vol. 1, no. 138.

392. Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*, s.a. 1221; Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 167. For confusion over the date of the wedding, see Carpenter, *Minority*, 245 n.11.

393. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 813, 814.

394. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 815, 816, 835.

395. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 835; *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1223.

396. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 834, 836, 841, 843.

397. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 856.

398. 'Annals of Worcester', in *Annales Monastici*, ed. H R Luard (London, 1869), vol. 4, 415. For the assembly of a royal army at Worcester, see Carpenter, *Minority*, 308.

399. *CDS*, vol. 5, no. 6.

400. Carpenter, *Minority*, 244–5.

401. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1358.

402. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 141.

403. F M Powicke, *King Henry III and the Lord Edward* (Oxford, 1947), vol. 1, 71–2; N Denholm-Young, *Richard of Cornwall* (Oxford, 1947), 8–15; D Carpenter, 'The Fall of Hubert de Burgh', *Journal of British Studies*, 19:2 (1980), 1–17 at 4, 16.

404. *Cal. Pat. Rolls 1225–32* (London, 1903), 172–3; *Close Rolls Henry III, 1227–31*, 8–11. Henry was at Crayke, north of York, on 14 December, see *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 989.

405. Matthew Paris, *Chron. Majora*, vol. 3, 206.

406. Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*, vol. 3, 15.

407. Carpenter, *Minority*, 390.

408. *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, *1232–47* (London, 1906), 126.

409. Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*, vol. 3, 68–9.

410. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1235.

411. 'Annals of Dunstable', in *Annales Monastici* (London, 1869), vol. 3, 143.

412. Duncan, *Kingship of the Scots*, 120.

413. Duncan, *Kingship of the Scots*, 122.

414. Duncan, *Kingship of the Scots*, 123; Duncan, *Making of the Kingdom*, 612 n.34.

415. Her name is often given as 'Meggotta' or similar variants, a pet diminutive form of Margaret.

416. The fullest discussion of 'Meggotta' is given in Powicke, *Henry III and the Lord Edward*, Appendix C, but this only considers her status as an English heiress and barely recognises her position in the Scottish royal succession.

417. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1297.

418. *Royal and Other Historical Letters Illustrative of the Reign of Henry III* [*Henry III Letters*], ed. W W Shirley, 2 vols (London, 1862–6), vol.

2, 377–8.

419. Powicke, *Henry III and the Lord Edward*, 761.

420. Powicke, *Henry III and the Lord Edward*, 761–6.

421. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1478.

422. *Annales Monastici*, vol. 1, 105.

423. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 64.

424. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 368.

425. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 821.

426. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1113

427. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 827.

428. Ferguson, *Medieval Papal Representatives*, 212–3, 234–5.

429. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 139.

430. Robertus de Graystanes' History, collected in *Historiae Dunelmensis Scriptores Tres* (Surtees Society, 1839), 36.

431. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 139, 141; D E R Watt, *A Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Graduates to AD 1410* (Oxford, 1977), 515–6; Powicke, *Henry III and the Lord Edward*, i, 267–70.

432. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 997.

433. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 139 and notes on 254–5.

434. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 969.

435. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 818, 822, 823.

436. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 823.

437. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 838.

438. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 948.

439. Carpenter, *Minority*, 376.

440. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 915.

441. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 906, 909. Roger was described as being in Alexander's custody on 26 December 1225; *CDS*, vol. 1, 923.

442. Anderson (ed.), *Scottish Annals*, 338; *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 855, 856.

443. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 939.

444. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 915, 923.

445. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 925.

446. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 939, 940.

447. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 966, 967.

448. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 941, 984.

449. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 969.

450. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 1002, 1003.

451. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1008.

452. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 1003–1005.

453. D A Carpenter, *The Struggle for Mastery: Britain 1066–1284* (London, 2003), 333.

454. Carpenter, *Struggle for Mastery*, 310–13.

455. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 1025, 1026.

456. Carpenter, *Struggle for Mastery*, 316.

457. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 1035, 1041, 1042, 1044, 1045, 1051; *CDS*, vol. 5, no. 10.

458. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 1066, 1096.

459. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 1052, 1056, 1057, 1067.

460. Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*, vol. 2, 381–2.

461. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1086.

462. Duncan, *Kingship of the Scots*, 120.

463. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1113.

464. Carpenter, *Struggle for Mastery*, 325.

465. Roger of Wendover, *Flores Historiarum*, vol. 3, 15.

466. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1233.

467. For her niece, Marguerite de Tosny, see G W Watson, 'Margaret de Toeny, Countess of Fife', *Miscellanea Genealogica et Heraldica and British Archivist*, 7, 5th series (London, 1929–31), 329–32.

468. M H Hammond, 'Queen Ermengarde and the Abbey of St Edward, Balmerino', *Cîteaux, Commentarii cistercienses* (2008), t.59 fasc. 1–2, 11–36 at 14, 16–17.

469. Hammond, 'Queen Ermengarde and the Abbey of St Edward', 15–16.

470. Hammond, 'Queen Ermengarde and the Abbey of St Edward', 13, 15, 16.

471. Hammond, 'Queen Ermengarde and the Abbey of St Edward', 17.

472. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1181.

473. Duncan, *Kingship of the Scots*, 120.

474. Carpenter, *Struggle for Mastery*, 312–3.

475. The following outline summarises discussion in Carpenter, *Struggle for Mastery*, 314–6.

476. Duncan, *Kingship of the Scots*, 120.

477. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1218.

478. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 1265–6, where the bulls are dated wrongly to 4 January 1236 (see *CDS*, vol. 5, 20).

479. Duncan, *Kingship of the Scots*, 120.

480. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1245.

481. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1255.

482. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1257.

483. For Joan's presence in England during this period, see *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 1258, 1260, 1261, 1308–12. It is possible that she was already resident in England, based at the manor of Stanton in Huntingdonshire which her brother had granted her in October 1234: *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1214.

484. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1277.

485. Matthew Paris, *Chron. Majora*, vol. 3, 363.

486. Matthew Paris, *Chron. Majora*, vol. 3, 372–3.

487. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1280. Matthew Paris wrongly locates the conference to York; see Matthew Paris, *Chron. Majora*, vol. 3, 372.

488. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1287.

489. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 1289–1292.

490. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1236; Matthew Paris, *Chron. Majora*, vol. 3, 373–3.

491. Matthew Paris, *Chron. Majora*, vol. 3, 373.

492. Ferguson, *Medieval Papal Representatives*, 89.

493. Theiner (ed.), *Vetera Monumenta*, 34, no. 87; Ferguson, *Medieval Papal Representatives*, 89.

494. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1295.

495. M Brown, *The Wars of Scotland, 1230–1371* (Edinburgh, 2004), 25. For discussion of the Marsh family in this context, see Powicke, *Henry III and the Lord Edward*, Appendix B.

496. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1335. For comment, see Powicke, *Henry III and the Lord Edward*, 750, n.2.

497. *Calendar of Documents Relating to Ireland* [*CDI*], ed. H S Sweetman (London, 1875), vol. 1, no. 2407.

498. Duncan, *Making of the Kingdom*, 533.

499. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 1321–3.

500. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1317

501. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1329.

502. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 1348, 1349, 1350; Ferguson, *Medieval Papal Representatives*, 91.

503. D M Williamson, 'The Legate Otto in Scotland and Ireland, 1237–1240', *Scottish Historical Review*, 28 (1949), 19. Compare Matthew Paris, *Chron. Majora*, vol. 3, 413; *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1237; and *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 1357, 1358, 1359. Henry himself was still at York on 28 September.

504. Ferguson, *Medieval Papal Representatives*, 91.

505. Stones, *Anglo-Scottish Relations*, no. 7.

506. Duncan, *Kingship of the Scots*, 121.

507. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1362.

508. *CDI*, vol. 1, no. 2407.

509. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 1363, 1370.

510. *CDS*, vol. 5, no. 12.

511. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1237.

512. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1238.

513. 'Annals of Worcester', in *Annales Monastici*, vol. 4, 428.

514. Matthew Paris, *Historia Anglorum*, ed. F Madden, 3 vols (London, 1866–9), vol. 2, 405.

515. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1390.

516. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1393.

517. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1395.

518. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1399.

519. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1401.

520. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1404; *Chronicle of Melrose*, s.a. 1238; Matthew Paris, *Chron. Majora*, vol. 3, 479.

521. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1405.

522. Oram, *Lordship of Galloway*, 144–5.

523. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1235; Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, vol. 3, s.a. 1236.

524. Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora*, vol. 3, s.a. 1236. For April 1236, see Carpenter, *Struggle for Mastery*, 331.

525. *Chron. Lanercost*, 42. Thomas remained a prisoner of his Balliol kinsmen for sixty years until March 1296, when Edward I of England

ordered his release as part of his preparations for war in Scotland: Oram, *Lordship of Galloway*, 145.

526. Stringer, 'Periphery and core'.

527. For the nature of the partition, see Oram, *Lordship of Galloway*, 146–50.

528. Carpenter, *Struggle for Mastery*, 330.

529. Oram, *Lordship of Galloway*, 153.

530. Carpenter, *Struggle for Mastery*, 331.

531. Duncan, *Kingship of the Scots*, 122–5.

532. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 1408, 1409, 1414, 1415, 1426.

533. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 1414 and 1425.

534. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1440.

535. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1506.

536. Duncan, *Making of the Kingdom*, 535.

537. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 1560, 1564.

538. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 1570–1573.

539. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 1575–1577.

540. Duncan, *Making of the Kingdom*, 535.

541. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1329.

542. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1369; Oram, *Lordship of Galloway*, 158.

543. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1368.

544. Duncan, *Making of the Kingdom*, 569.

545. Barrow, *Kingship and Unity*, 151; Matthew Paris, *Historia Anglorum*, vol. 2, 419. Powicke, *Henry III and the Lord Edward*, did not even regard the marriage as worth mentioning other than in a footnote (247n.), where the reference is actually to Marie in her widowhood and remarriage.

546. *Chron. Fordun*, vol. 1, s.a. 1239.

547. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1444.

548. *The Original Chronicle of Andrew of Wyntoun* [*Chron. Wyntoun*] (Scottish Text Society, 1903–14), vol. 5, 80–3, 94–7.

549. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 273 notes for line 11. Enguerrand is said by the Dunstable annalist to have been left in command of the Dauphin's forces in England in 1217 when Louis returned to France to seek aid from his father: Anderson (ed.), *Early Sources*, vol. 2, 417 n.6.

550. For details of Marie's ancestry, see Anderson (ed.), *Early Sources*,

vol. 2, 514 n.4.

551. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1239.

552. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1241.

553. Matthew Paris, *Chron. Majora*, vol. 4, 135–6.

554. Matthew Paris, *Chron. Majora*, vol. 4, 193; *Foedera, Conventiones, Litterae et Cuiuscunque Generis Acta Publica*, ed. T Rymer (Records Commission edition, 1816–69), i, 1, 244.

555. Matthew Paris, *Chron. Majora*, vol. 4, 192–3.

556. Duncan, *Making of the Kingdom*, 536 n.28.

557. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1242.

558. Matthew Paris, *Chron. Majora*, vol. 4, 200–1.

559. *Chron. Lanercost*, s.a. 1242.

560. *Chron. Wyntoun*, vol. 5, 98–107; Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 179, 277. For later chronicle references, see *Chron. Pluscarden*, vol. 1, 75; *Extracta e Variis Cronicis Scocie* [*Chron. Extracta*] (Abbotsford Club, 1842), 98–9. John Major's early sixteenth-century account mistakenly places Alexander at Haddington at the time of the tournament and Patrick's death: John Major, *A History of Greater Britain, 1521*, ed. and trans. A Constable (Scottish History Society, 1892), 180–1. Most of these later accounts wrongly name the head of the Bissets as 'William', probably reflecting an incorrect re-expansion of a 'W' given in their common source.

561. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 179.

562. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1243.

563. Matthew Paris, *Chron. Majora*, vol. 4, 201–2.

564. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 179.

565. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 181. *Registrum Episcopatus Glasguensis* [*Glasgow Register*], no. 181, a charter issued by King Alexander, was witnessed at Scone on 15 July by a substantial group of leading prelates and magnates of the kingdom, probably gathered there for the council meeting in Perth.

566. Matthew Paris, *Chron. Majora*, vol. 4, 202–3.

567. Alexander was at Forfar on 4 August, in the company of Philip de Melville and Robert de Mowat, co-justiciars of Scotia, and Robert de Meyners: See *Charters of the Friars Preacher of Ayr* (Edinburgh, 1881), no. 1. There is no evidence that the initiative for calling out the army of Mar belonged to Alan Durward, as suggested in Brown, *Wars of*

Scotland, 40.

568. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 183.

569. Matthew Paris, *Chron. Majora*, vol. 4, 201; Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 183.

570. Melrose places the sentence of outlawry and exile in 1243: see *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1243. Bower, however, places the sentence in 1242 and details a forty-day period of grace in which the Bissets could prepare to quit the kingdom: Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 185.

571. Matthew Paris, *Chron. Majora*, vol. 4, 201–2.

572. Brown, *Wars of Scotland*, 39–41; Oram, *Lordship of Galloway*, 150–1; A Young, *Robert the Bruce's Rivals: The Comyns, 1212–1314* (East Linton, 1997), 41–3; Duncan, *Making of the Kingdom*, 543–6.

573. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1235.

574. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1894; Oram, *Lordship of Galloway*, 132; Duncan, *Making of the Kingdom*, 543.

575. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 180.

576. M H Hammond, '*Hostiarii Regis Scotie*: The Durward family in the thirteenth century', in S Boardman and A Ross (eds), *The Exercise of Power in Medieval Scotland* (Dublin, 2003), 127; Duncan, *Making of the Kingdom*, 543.

577. Young, *The Comyns*, 42.

578. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1242; Young, *The Comyns*, 42.

579. Young, *The Comyns*, 38–43.

580. Hammond, 'Durward family', 127–31; R D Oram, 'Continuity, adaptation and integration: The earls and earldom of Mar, c.1150–c.1300', in S Boardman and A Ross (eds), *The Exercise of Power in Medieval Scotland* (Dublin, 2003), 53–5, 61.

581. *Rental Book of the Cistercian Abbey of Cupar Angus* (Grampian Club, 1879), vol. 1, Breviarium, no. 34, *Arbroath Liber*, nos 102, 128; *Liber Cartarum Sancte Crucis* [*Holyrood Liber*] (Bannatyne Club, 1840), no. 93; *RRS*, vol. 5, no. 346; *Moray Register*, no. 114; *RRS*, vol. 6, 49; Hammond, 'Durward family', 127–8.

582. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 179.

583. Brown, *Wars of Scotland*, 39.

584. *Chron. Lanercost*, s.a. 1242.

585. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1233.

586. Duncan, *Making of the Kingdom*, 545.

587. Oram, *Lordship of Galloway*, 123–4.

588. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1242.

589. Oram, 'Introduction and overview', 45–6.

590. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 283, notes to lines 61 and 66.

591. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 187.

592. Barrow, *Kingdom of the Scots*, 90–1, 100; Duncan, *Making of the Kingdom*, 545–6; Young, *The Comyns*, 45; Brown, *Wars of Scotland*, 40.

593. Barrow, *Kingdom of the Scots*, 100; *RRS*, vol. 2, 6, 7, no. 192.

594. *Holyrood Liber*, no. 71; *Charters of the Abbey of Coupar Angus*, ed. D E Easson (Scottish History Society, 1947), no. 45.

595. Duncan, *Making of the Kingdom*, 545; Young, *The Comyns*, 45. If charter attestation forms the basis for arguments that de Melville was pro-Comyn, it must be noted that he also witnessed acts by Alan Durward and his father.

596. Duncan, *Making of the Kingdom*, 546.

597. Hammond, 'Durward family', 123, 124–40; Oram, 'Earls and earldom of Mar', 54–8, 61–2.

598. Oram, 'Earls and earldom of Mar', 61.

599. Young, *The Comyns*, 45–7; Brown, *Wars of Scotland*, 42–3.

600. Hammond, 'Durward family', 130.

601. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 185.

602. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1244.

603. Matthew Paris, *Chron. Majora*, vol. 4, 202.

604. Matthew Paris, *Chron. Majora*, vol. 4, 358.

605. Duncan, *Kingship of the Scots*, 121.

606. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 187.

607. Oram, *Lordship of Galloway*, 153, 156.

608. Carpenter, *Struggle for Mastery*, 344.

609. Matthew Paris, *Chron. Majora*, vol. 4, 379–80.

610. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1621.

611. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1703.

612. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 1624, 1630, 1632, 1638.

613. Carpenter, *Struggle for Mastery*, 363–4.

614. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1631.

615. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1637.

616. Matthew Paris, *Chron. Majora*, vol. 4, 359, 378.

617. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 1640, 1641.

618. *CDS*, vol. 1, nos 1642, 1643, 1644, 1646.

619. Matthew Paris, *Chron. Majora*, vol. 4, 361; *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1244; Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 185.

620. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 185.

621. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1647.

622. Matthew Paris, *Chron. Majora*, vol. 4, 380; *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1648.

623. 'Annals of Dunstable', in *Annales Monastici*, vol. 3, s.a. 1244; *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1244; Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 185; Duncan, *Kingship of the Scots*, 121.

624. Matthew Paris, *Chron. Majora*, vol. 4, 381–5.

625. Duncan, *Kingship of the Scots*, 121–2.

626. *APS*, vol. 1, 108.

627. Carpenter, *Struggle for Mastery*, 336.

628. *Registrum de Dunfermelyn* [*Dunfermline Register*] (Bannatyne Club, 1842), no. 77; *RMS*, vol. 2, no. 3136.

629. *CDI*, vol. 2, no. 2; McNeill, *Anglo-Norman Ulster*, 22; Duncan, *Making of the Kingdom*, 550.

630. *Moray Register*, no. 122.

631. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 832; *CDS*, vol. 5, 15, for re-dating.

632. Anderson (ed.), *Early Sources*, vol. 2, 539.

633. Duncan, *Making of the Kingdom*, 127; Anderson (ed.), *Early Sources*, vol. 2, 112–3.

634. *Morkinskinna: The Earliest Icelandic Chronicle of the Norwegian Kings (1030–1157)*, ed. and trans. T M Anderson and K E Gade (Cornell, 2000), 301–2.

635. Oram, *Domination and Lordship*, 49.

636. Anderson (ed.), *Early Sources*, vol. 2, 540.

637. Duncan, *Making of the Kingdom*, 549–50; Brown, *Wars of Scotland*, 43.

638. Duncan, *Making of the Kingdom*, 197.

639. *Moray Register*, no. 1; *RRS*, vol. 2, no. 520.

640. Crawford, 'Earldom of Caithness'. The creation of the earldom may have been the context in which Alexander's reconfirmation of the original grant of Hugh to Gilbert of the lands of Skelbo, etc, made

during his Christmas court at Scone in 1235, occurred; see *Moray Register*, no. 4. Alternatively, the creation of the earldom may have occurred in late July 1236, when Alexander was at Inverness; see *RMS*, vol. 2, no. 804.

641. Duncan, *Making of the Kingdom*, 549; McDonald, *Kingdom of the Isles*, 212–4; Murray, 'Swerving from the path of justice', 302–3.

642. *Highland Papers*, ed. J R N Macphail, 4 vols (Scottish History Society, 1914–34), vol. 2, 121–4.

643. *Chron. Man*, s.a. 1237.

644. *Chron. Man*, s.a. 1238.

645. *Chron. Man*, s.a. 1239.

646. Beuermann, 'Masters of the narrow sea', 333–4.

647. *Liber Vitae Ecclesiae Dunelmensis* [*Durham Liber Vitae*], ed. J Stevenson (Surtees Society, 1841), 135.

648. Sellar, 'Hebridean sea kings', 201–3.

649. *CDS*, vol. 1, no. 1655; for re-dating of this document see *CDS*, vol. 5, 25–6, no. 1655.

650. *AU*, s.a. 1247. For discussion of this point, compare Sellar, 'Hebridean sea kings', 201, and Woolf, 'A dead man at Ballyshannon'.

651. *RMS*, vol. 2, no. 3136.

652. Anderson (ed), *Early Sources*, vol. 2, 529 n.3.

653. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1241; Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 175 and notes.

654. Dowden, *Bishops of Scotland*, 378–9; Duncan, *Making of the Kingdom*, 549; Murray, 'Swerving from the path of justice', 302–3.

655. *Chron. Man*, s.a. 1242.

656. *Chron. Man*, s.a. 1247 (correctly 1246).

657. *Chron. Man*, s.a. 1247–8.

658. Anderson (ed.), *Early Sources*, vol. 2, 547–8.

659. Beuermann, 'Masters of the narrow sea', 335–6.

660. Anderson (ed.), *Early Sources*, vol. 2, 549–50, 551; *Chron. Man*, s.a. 1249 (correctly 1248).

661. *Chron. Man*, s.a. 1249.

662. *Chron. Man*, s.a. 1249.

663. Anderson (ed.), *Early Sources*, vol. 2, 554–5.

664. Beuermann, 'Masters of the narrow sea', 339.

665. *Registrum Monasterii Sancte Marie de Cambuskenneth* [*Cambuskenneth Register*] (Grampian Club, 1872), no. 53.

666. Anderson (ed.), *Early Sources*, vol. 2, 555.

667. Anderson (ed.), *Early Sources*, vol. 2, 555–6.

668. Matthew Paris, *Chron. Majora*, vol. 4, 563.

669. Matthew Paris, *Chron. Majora*, vol. 4, 653.

670. Oram, *Lordship of Galloway*, 153.

671. Matthew Paris, *Chron. Majora*, vol. 5, 88.

672. A A M Duncan and A L Brown, 'Argyll and the Isles in the Earlier Middle Ages', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 90 (1959), 209–10; McDonald, *Kingdom of the Isles*, 213; Murray, 'Swerving from the path of justice', 302–3.

673. Matthew Paris, *Chron. Majora*, vol. 5, 88–9.

674. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1249.

675. *Chron. Man*, s.a. 1249.

676. Duncan and Brown, 'Argyll and the Isles', 207–10; Dunbar and Duncan, 'Tarbert Castle'.

677. Anderson (ed.), *Early Sources*, vol. 2, 556, n.7.

678. Theiner (ed.), *Vetera Monumenta*, no. 131; *CPL*, vol. 1, 243.

679. Matthew Paris, *Chron. Majora*, vol. 5, 89; Anderson (ed), *Early Sources*, vol. 2, 557; *Chron. Man*, s.a. 1249; *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1249.

680. *RMS*, vol. 2, no. 3136.

681. Duncan and Brown, 'Argyll and the Isles', 209–10; McDonald, *Kingdom of the Isles*, 213.

682. Warren, *King John*, 206–12.

683. Ferguson, *Papal Representatives*, 76–8.

684. *Henry III Letters*, vol. 1, 527–8.

685. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1217.

686. *Chron. Merose*, s.a. 1215 and 1218. Bishop Walter, however, had returned in time to suffer with the rest of the Scottish clergy as a consequence of the pronouncement of the bann of excommunication and interdict against Alexander, and was obliged to seek personal absolution from Guala in 1218.

687. Ferguson, *Papal Representatives*, 76–81.

688. Stringer, 'War of 1215–17', 139.

689. Theiner (ed.), *Vetera Monumenta*, no. 4.

690. *Letters of Guala*, no. 172.

691. Stringer, 'War of 1215–17', 139; *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1217.

692. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1217; *Chron. Fordun*, vol. 2, 282; *Letters of Guala*, no. 112.

693. *Chron. Fordun*, vol. 2, 283; *Letters of Guala*, no. 115.

694. Ferguson, *Papal Representatives*, 80 and n.91; *Letters of Guala*, no. 131. Both men, however, gained that absolution and were amongst the few of those clerks suspended by Guala who were able to regain their ecclesiastical positions.

695. *Letters of Guala*, no. 113.

696. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1218.

697. *Letters of Guala*, no. 114.

698. Barrell, 'Scotland and the papacy', 159.

699. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, v, 133.

700. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1218.

701. For the text of the bull, see Stones, *Anglo-Scottish Relations*, no. 5.

702. Ferguson, *Papal Representatives*, 81–2.

703. Ferguson, *Papal Representatives*, 82.

704. Ferguson, *Papal Representatives*, 84.

705. Ferguson, *Papal Representatives*, 85–6; D E R Watt, *Church Councils in Medieval Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2000), 40–2.

706. *CPL*, vol. 1, 83; Robertson, *Concilia*, xlv, n.2; Watt, *Medieval Church Councils*, 42.

707. Watt, *Medieval Church Councils*, 43–7.

708. *Chron. Fordun*, vol. 2, 285.

709. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 143.

710. Ferguson, *Papal Representatives*, 89.

711. Matthew Paris, *Chron. Majora*, vol. 3, 414.

712. Matthew Paris, *Chron. Majora*, vol. 3, 568.

713. Barrell, 'Scotland and the papacy', 161.

714. Ferguson, *Papal Representatives*, 95.

715. Theiner (ed.), *Vetera Monumenta*, no. 131; Ferguson, *Papal Representatives*, 99.

716. Theiner (ed.), *Vetera Monumenta*, no. 109.

717. See discussion in Ferguson, *Papal Representatives*, 97–8.

718. Theiner (ed.), *Vetera Monumenta*, 48; *CPL*, vol. 1, 237.

719. Barrell, 'Scotland and the papacy', 170.

720. Oram, *Domination and Lordship*, 331–4.

721. Theiner (ed.), *Vetera Monumenta*, 13, no. 29.

722. *Cal. Pat. Rolls*, 111.

723. *Letters of Guala*, no. 12 and notes. See Stringer, 'War of 1215–17', 136–8.

724. Watt, *Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Graduates*, 477; Stringer, 'War of 1215–17', 137.

725. *CDS*, vol. 1, 111; *Letters of Guala*, no. 63.

726. *Letters of Guala*, no. 141 and notes.

727. Theiner (ed.), *Vetera Monumenta*, 6, no. 13.

728. Watt, *Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Graduates*, 477.

729. *Melrose Liber*, no. 121; *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1211.

730. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 81.

731. Stringer, 'War of 1215–17', 137.

732. *Letters of Guala*, no. 131; Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 141.

733. *Chron. Fordun*, vol. 2, 285; Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 115–17, 244–5.

734. Watt, *Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Graduates*, 414–17.

735. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1235; Oram, *Lordship of Galloway*, 182–5.

736. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1235.

737. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1235.

738. G Donaldson, 'The bishops and priors of Whithorn', *Transactions of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society*, 27 (1948–9), 136 and n.17a.

739. The details of this dispute are discussed in Dowden, *Bishops of Scotland*, 356–7; Donaldson, 'Bishops and priors', 136–7; A Ashley, 'Odo, elect of Whithorn', *Transactions of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society*, 37 (1958–9), 62–9; R D Oram, 'The medieval bishops of Whithorn, their cathedral and their tombs', in C Lowe (ed.), *'Clothing for the Soul Divine': Burials at the Tomb of St Ninian* (Edinburgh, 2009), 135–6.

740. *Historians of the Church of York and Its Archbishops*, ed. J Raine (London, 1879–94), vol. 3, 148–9.

741. *CPL*, vol. 1, 193.

742. *Register of Walter Grey, Lord Archbishop of York*, ed. J Raine (Surtees Society, 1870), 170, 171.

743. Ashley, 'Odo, elect of Whithorn', 66–7.

744. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1235.

745. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1235.

746. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 141, 143.

747. Watt, *Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Graduates*, 489.

748. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 143.

749. Watt, *Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Graduates*, 524 (Strivelyn, Gilbert de).

750. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 143, 145 and notes; Watt, *Biographical Dictionary of Scottish Graduates*, 489.

751. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 147 and notes.

752. Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 323.

753. *Chron. Melrose*, s.a. 1232; Bower, *Scotichronicon*, vol. 5, 147 and notes.

754. Duncan, *Making of the Kingdom*, 559.

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Index

Abel, Master, Scottish royal clerk, ref1, ref2
Aberdeen, ref1
bishop of, ref1 (*see also* Adam Calder, Gilbert of Stirling)
bishopric of, ref1
castle, ref1
cathedral, ref1
Dominican convent at, ref1
sheriff of, *see* Philip de Melville
Aberdeenshire, ref1, ref2, ref3
Aberdour Castle, ref1
Abernethy, Gaelic monastery and school at, ref1, ref2
Abertarff, castle of, ref1
Aboyne Castle, ref1, ref2, ref3
Ada, mother of King William, ref1
Adam, abbot of Melrose, ref1
bishop of Caithness, ref1, ref2, ref3
murder of, ref1, ref2
Aden, ref1
Áed Méith ua Néill, king of Cenél nEógain, ref1, ref2, ref3
Ailred of Rievaulx, ref1
Aird, ref1, ref2
Bisset lordship of, ref1, ref2
Alan 'son of the earl', illegitimate son of Thomas of Galloway, ref1, ref2
Alan son of Walter, the Steward, ref1
Alexander I, king of Scots, ref1, ref2
Alexander II, king of Scots, ref1, ref2, ref3
as war-leader, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7
birth of, ref1, ref2
dealings with English Committee of Twenty-five, ref1, ref2, ref3
death of, ref1
description of, ref1

episcopal appointments by, ref1, ref2
excommunicated by Guala, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7
experience of government, ref1, ref2, ref3
heritage of in northern England, ref1, ref2
historical reputation of, ref1, ref2
homage of, demanded by Dauphin Louis, ref1, ref2
homage of, demanded by King Henry III, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
homage of, demanded by King John, ref1, ref2
illegitimate children of, ref1, ref2
inauguration of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
knighted, ref1
marriage of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14, ref15
marriage to Joan, sister of Henry III, at York, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7
marriage to Marie de Coucy, ref1
meetings at Newcastle with Henry III, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
naming of, ref1
negotiations for Treaty of York (1237), ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5
negotiations with legate Pandulf, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8
Norfolk wardship controlled by, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
northern English barons submit to, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
personal faith and religious behaviour, ref1, ref2
policy towards and military campaigns in Argyll, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13
policy in Galloway, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7
raddure, ref1
receives homage of northern English barons, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
relations with Henry III, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12
relations with Hubert de Burgh, ref1, ref2
relations of with King John of England, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14, ref15, ref16, ref17, ref18

relations of with papacy, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8
relations with Scottish nobles, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7
reputation and achievements, ref1
seeks rite of coronation and unction, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7
sisters of, *see* Isabella, Margaret, Margery
succession to throne, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7
wardships controlled by, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8
Alexander III, king of Scots, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7
historical reputation of, ref1, ref2
inauguration, ref1
marriage of, to Margaret, daughter of Henry III, ref1, ref2
Alexander the Steward, ref1
Alnwick, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
Angevin ‘empire’, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Angoulême, Isabelle of, widow of King John, ref1, ref2, ref3
Angus, earls of, ref1 *see* John Comyn, Malcolm
Anjou, ref1, ref2
Antrim, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
castle, ref1, ref2
Aonghus son of Sumarliði, ref1
Appleby,
castle, ref1
lordship of, ref1
Arbroath Abbey, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7
Ardchattan Priory, ref1, ref2, ref3
Ardtornish Castle, ref1
Argyll, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11
Alexander II’s policy towards, *see* Alexander II
bishopric, diocese or see of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
bishops of, *see* William, chancellor of Moray
rulers of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4 (*see also* Donnchad mac Dubhgaill, Eógan son of Donnchad mac Dubhghaill, Sumarliði)
see or bishopric of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9
Armagh, Gaelic-Irish academic centre, ref1

Aros Castle, ref1
Arthur of Brittany, nephew of King John, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Atholl,
countess of, *see* Forveleth, Isabella, Margaret
earl of, *see* Alan Durward, David Hastings, Malcolm, Patrick, Thomas of Galloway
earldom of, ref1
Auldearn Castle, ref1
Aumale, count of, *see* William de Forz
Austria, ref1
Ayr, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Dominican convent at, ref1
Balliol, Henry, chamberlain of Alexander II, ref1, ref2
Balliol, John, king of Scots, ref1
Balliol, Hugh, lord of Barnard Castle, ref1, ref2, ref3
Balliol, John, lord of Barnard Castle, ref1
Ballyshannon, battle of, ref1, ref2, ref3
Balmerino Abbey, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
Balvenie Castle, ref1, ref2
Bamburgh Castle, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Banff Castle, ref1
Barbour, John, ref1
Barnard Castle, castle and lordship, ref1, ref2, ref3
Barry, church and lands of, ref1
Beaulieu, abbot of, *see* Hugh, bishop of Carlisle
Beauly Firth, ref1
Beauly Priory, ref1, ref2
Beaumont, Ermengarde de, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
as queen-mother, ref1, ref2, ref3
dies, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
foundress of Balmerino Abbey, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
marriage to William, king of Scots, ref1
pregnancies of, ref1, ref2, ref3
pro-English policies of, ref1, ref2

religious patronage of, ref1, ref2
Beaumont, Richard de, vicomte of Beaumont-sur-Sarthe, ref1
Beaumont-sur-Sarthe, ref1
Bellingham, ref1
Bergen, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Bernham, David de, bishop of St Andrews, ref1
Bertram, Roger, ref1
Berwick (-upon-Tweed), ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14
bridge, ref1
castle, ref1, ref2
church council at, ref1
Dominican convent at, ref1, ref2
Hospital of St Edward at, ref1
sacked by King John, ref1, ref2
Biarnaborg Castle, ref1
Bigod, Hugh, earl of Norfolk, ref1
Bigod, Roger, earl of Norfolk, ref1, ref2, ref3
Bisset, John, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
accused of Patrick of Atholl, ref1, ref2
lands of in Ulster, ref1
returns to Scotland, ref1
Bisset, Walter, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5
accused of killing Patrick of Atholl, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
attacks upon, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5
connection to Alan Durward, ref1
husband of Patrick of Atholl's aunt, ref1
lands of in Ulster, ref1, ref2
returns to Scotland, ref1
service to Henry III, ref1, ref2, ref3
supported by king and queen, ref1, ref2
trial of, ref1
Blackhall (*Nigram Aulam*), ref1
Blundeville, Matilda de, wife of Earl David of Huntingdon, ref1

Blundeville, Ranulf de, earl of Chester, ref1, ref2, ref3
Bolebec family, ref1
Bolebec, Hugh de, sheriff of Northumberland, ref1, ref2, ref3
Bondington, William de, bishop of Glasgow, ref1, ref2, ref3
chancellor of Alexander II, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Book of Deer, ref1
Bordeaux, ref1, ref2
Bothwell Castle, ref1
Boulogne, Count Philip of, ref1
Boulogne, Count Renaud of, ref1
Bower, Walter, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14, ref15, ref16, ref17, ref18, ref19, ref20, ref21, ref22, ref23, ref24, ref25, ref26, ref27, ref28 (*see also* Scotichronicon)
Braal Castle, ref1, ref2
Brabantine mercenaries, ref1, ref2, ref3
Breachacha Castle, ref1
Bréauté, Falkes de, sheriff of Northampton and Huntingdon, ref1
Brechin,
bishop of, *see* Gregory
cathedral, ref1
Brechin, William de, ref1
Brian son of Alan, sheriff of Northumberland, ref1
de Briouze family, ref1
Bristol, ref1, ref2, ref3
Britheamh, ref1
Brittany, ref1
duke of, *see* Peter Mauclerc *see also* Arthur, Eleanor
Brough Castle, ref1
Brougham Castle, ref1
Bruce, Robert V, lord of Annandale, ref1
Buchan, ref1
earl of, ref1, ref2 (*see also* Alexander Comyn, William Comyn)
earldom of, ref1
Burgh, Hubert de, justiciar of England, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6,

ref7, ref8, ref9

daughter of, *see* daughter Margaret *under* Margaret, eldest daughter of King William

disgrace and fall, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9

marries Margaret, sister of Alexander II, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4 (*see also* Margaret, eldest daughter of King William)

relationship with Alexander II, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5

Burgundy, ref1

Bute, ref1, ref2

Caddonlee, ref1

Cairnaburgh, castle of, ref1

Cairnamount, ref1

Caithness, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14, ref15, ref16

bishop of, ref1 (*see also* Adam, abbot of Melrose, Gilbert de Moravia)

earl of, ref1, ref2, ref3 (*see also* Harald Maddadsson; Jón, earl of Caithness and Orkney; Malcolm, earl of Angus and Caithness)

earldom of, ref1

Scottish royal campaigns in, ref1, ref2, ref3

see of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7

Calder, Adam, bishop of Aberdeen, ref1

Canterbury, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6

archbishops of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4 (*see also* Stephen Langton, Thomas Becket)

Quitclaim of, ref1, ref2

shrine of St Thomas at, ref1, ref2, ref3

Cantilupe, Walter de, bishop of Worcester, ref1

Cardigan, castle and lordship of, ref1

Carham, ref1

Carlanton, ref1

Carlisle, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14, ref15

bishops of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6 (*see also* Hugh, bishop of Carlisle)

canons of, ref1, ref2

castle, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7
cathedral-priory, ref1, ref2
diocese of, ref1, ref2
lordship of, ref1, ref2
Carrickfergus Castle, ref1
Carthusian order, ref1
Castle of Old Wick, ref1
Castle Roy, ref1
Castle Sween, ref1, ref2, ref3
Cathal Crobderg ua Conchobair, king of Connacht, ref1
Celestine III, pope, ref1, ref2
Cenél Conaill, ref1
king of, *see* Mael Sechlainn ua Domnaill
Cenél nEógain, ref1
king of, *see* Áed Méith ua Néill
chancellor of the king of Scots, *see* Matthew Scot, Thomas of Stirling, William del Bois, William de Bondington
Château Gaillard, ref1
Chester, earl of, *see* John, earl of Huntingdon, Ranulf de Blundeville
Cheviot Hills, ref1
Christiana, ref1nd daughter of Alan of Galloway, ref1
Chronicle of the Kings of Man and the Isles, ref1, ref2
Cinaed mac Alpin, as dynastic founder, ref1
Cinque Ports, ref1
Cistercian order, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12
architecture of, ref1
defies Guala's interdict in Scotland, ref1, ref2
excommunicated, ref1, ref2
patronage of by Alexander II, ref1, ref2, ref3
Scottish abbeys of order, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6 (*see also* Balmerino, Culross, Deer, Dundrennan, Glenluce, Kinloss, Melrose, Newbattle)
Cîteaux, abbot of, ref1
Clackmannan, ref1, ref2

Clann Somhairle, ref1, ref2, ref3 (*see also* Mhic Domhnaill, Mhic Dubhgaill, Mhic Ruaidhrí, Mhic Somhairle)
Clare family, ref1
Clare, Richard de, earl of Gloucester and Hertford, ref1
Clement, bishop of Dunblane, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9; *see also* Dominican order
Clunie in Stormont, castle, ref1
Clyde,
firth or estuary of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11
islands, ref1, ref2
ports, *see* Ayr, Dumbarton, Irvine
valley, ref1, ref2
Clydesdale, ref1
Cockermouth Castle, ref1
Coldingham Priory, ref1
Coleraine Castle, ref1
Coll, island of, ref1
Committee of Twenty-five, *see* The Twenty-Five
Compostella, ref1
Comyn, Alexander,
earl of Buchan, ref1
heir to earldom of Buchan, ref1, ref2
Comyn, John, earl of Angus, ref1
Comyn, John, the Red, ref1, ref2
Comyn, Walter, ref1
earl of Menteith, ref1, ref2, ref3
Comyn, William, earl of Buchan, ref1, ref2, ref3
Justiciar of Scotia, ref1, ref2, ref3
Constance, illegitimate daughter of Henry I of England, ref1
Constantine of Goswick, ref1
Corfe Castle, ref1
Coucy, Marie de, queen of Scots, ref1nd wife of Alexander II, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Coull, lordship of, ref1

Courcy, John de, lord of Ulster, ref1
Courcy, William de, abbot of Melrose, ref1, ref2, ref3
Courtenay, Robert de, ref1
Coventry, Walter of, ref1, ref2, ref3
Cowal, ref1, ref2, ref3
Crail, ref1, ref2
castle, ref1
crannogs, ref1
Cree, river, ref1, ref2
Cromarty Firth, ref1, ref2
Cruggleton Castle, ref1
Cubbie Roo's Castle, ref1
Cullen Castle, ref1
Cullykhan, excavations at, ref1
Culross Abbey, ref1
Cum universi, papal bull, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10
Cumberland, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14
castles of, ref1
lands of Scottish crown in, ref1, ref2, ref3
sheriff of, ref1 (*see also* Robert de Ros)
sheriffdom of, ref1
Cumin, William, chancellor of David I, ref1
Cupar Castle, ref1
Dala Castle, ref1
Dauphin, *see* Louis VIII, king of France
David I, king of Scots, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14, ref15, ref16, ref17, ref18, ref19
as religious patron, ref1, ref2, ref3
control of northern England by, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7
kingship of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
David, earl of Huntingdon, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14, ref15, ref16, ref17
as heir of Scotland, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6

daughters, ref1, ref2
death of, ref1, ref2
homage of to Alexander, ref1
marries Matilda de Blundeville, ref1
Deer, abbey of, ref1
Book of, ref1
del Bois, William, chancellor of the king of Scots, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7
Dercongal, abbey of, ref1
Dere Street, ref1, ref2
Dervorguilla, ref1rd daughter of Alan of Galloway, ref1, ref2
Devizes Castle, ref1, ref2
Diarmait Ua Conchobair, claimant to kingship of Connacht, ref1
Dirleton Castle, ref1
Domhnall mac Raonaill, ref1, ref2, ref3 (*see also* Mhic Domhnaill kin)
Dominican order, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Donald III Bán, king of Scots, ref1
Donald son of Neil, ref1
Doncaster, ref1
Donnchadh mac Dubhghaill, lord of Argyll or Lorn, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7
founds Ardchattan Priory, ref1, ref2
supports Alexander II, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Dornoch Cathedral, ref1
Doune of Invernochty, ref1
Douglas, Brice, bishop of Moray, ref1, ref2
Douglas, James, ref1
Dover Castle, ref1, ref2, ref3
Driffield, manor of, ref1, ref2
Drogheda, ref1
Drumdreel, ref1
Dryburgh Abbey, ref1
Duart Castle, ref1
Dubhghall mac Ruaidhrí, aspirant to kingship of the Isles, ref1, ref2
Dubhghall Screech, ref1, ref2

Dubhghall son of Sumarliði, king of the Isles, ref1, ref2
sons of, *see* Donnchadh, Dubhghall Screech, Sumarliði, Uspak
Dublin, ref1
Duffus, lordship and castle of, ref1, ref2
Dumbarton, ref1
Dumfries, ref1
sheriffdom of, ref1, ref2
dun-building tradition, ref1
Dun Lagaidh, ref1
Dun Ringill, ref1
Dunbar, ref1
castle, ref1
earl of, ref1, ref2, ref3 (*see also* Patrick (1), Patrick (2))
family, ref1, ref2
Dunblane, ref1
bishop of, ref1 (*see also* Clement, Osbert)
cathedral, ref1
Gaelic school at, ref1
see of, ref1, ref2, ref3
Duncan II, king of Scots, ref1, ref2
heirs of, *see* MacWilliam family, William son of Duncan
Dundee Castle, ref1
Dundrennan Abbey, ref1
Dunfermline Abbey, ref1
monks of, ref1
tomb and shrine of St Margaret at, ref1, ref2
Dunkeld, ref1, ref2
bishop of, ref1, ref2 (*see also* Hugh de Sigillo, Matthew Scot)
cathedral of, ref1
Gaelic school at, ref1
see of, ref1
Dunnet Head, ref1
Dunoon, constable of, ref1
Dunstable chronicle, ref1, ref2

Dunstaffnage Castle, ref1, ref2, ref3
Durham, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5
castle, ref1, ref2
cathedral-priory and monks of, ref1, ref2, ref3
Liber Vitae of, ref1
prior of, ref1
Durham, bishop of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9 (*see also* Richard le Poer, Richard Marsh William Stichill)
bishopric, diocese or see of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
builds castle at Tweedmouth, ref1
castle of at Norham, ref1, ref2
election of William of Stichill, ref1
Durward, Alan, ref1, ref2
association with Bisset family, ref1, ref2, ref3
claims to earldoms of Atholl and Mar, ref1, ref2, ref3
earl of Atholl, ref1
family of, ref1, ref2
justiciar of Scotia, ref1, ref2, ref3
rivalry with Comyn family, ref1, ref2
son-in-law of Alexander II, ref1, ref2
Eamont, river, ref1
Easingwold, ref1
Eden, river, ref1
Edgar, king of Scots, ref1, ref2
Edinburgh, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14
castle, ref1, ref2, ref3
Dominican friary, ref1
royal council meetings at, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
royal court at, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Edward I, king of England, ref1
Eilean Craggan, crannog, ref1
Eleanor, sister of Henry III, ref1
Countess of Pembroke, ref1
Eleanor of Brittany, ref1

Eleanor of Provence, wife of Henry III, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5
Elgin, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8
castle, ref1, ref2
cathedral, ref1, ref2
Dominican convent at, ref1
mill of, ref1
Elyas of Derham, Master, sculptor, ref1
England,
Angevin dynasty in, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Anglo-Saxon ruling class, ref1
as papal fief, ref1
civil war in (1135), ref1; (1173), ref1; (1215), ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12; (1233), ref1, ref2, ref3
government of, *see* The Twenty-five
kings of, *see* Edward I, Henry I, Henry II, Henry III, John, Richard I
Midlands of, ref1, ref2, ref3
nobility of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14
northern counties of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14, ref15, ref16, ref17, ref18, ref19, ref20, ref21 (*see also* Cumberland, Northumberland, Westmorland)
papal influence in, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
policy towards Scotland, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
political community of, ref1, ref2
royal court of, ref1
Treasurer of, ref1, ref2
wars with France, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7
wars with Scotland, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14, ref15, ref16, ref17, ref18, ref19, ref20
Enguerrand III de Coucy, sieur de Coucy, ref1, ref2
Eógan son of Donnchad mac Dubhghaill, lord of Argyll or Lorn, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
king of Man and the Isles, ref1, ref2
relationship with Alexander II, ref1, ref2
relationship with Hákon IV, ref1, ref2, ref3

Ermengarde de Beaumont, wife of King William, *see* Beaumont
Esk, river, ref1
Essex, ref1
Ettrick Forest, ref1
Faeroe Islands, ref1
Falaise, Treaty of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9
Falkland Castle, ref1
Felton, ref1, ref2, ref3
Filia specialis, papal bull, ref1, ref2
Fife, earl of, *see* Malcolm
Findhorn, river, ref1
Finlaggan Castle, ref1
Fland Mainistrech, Gaelic-Irish scholar, ref1
Forest of Dean, ref1
Forfar, ref1, ref2
Alexander II's court at, ref1, ref2, ref3
castle, ref1, ref2, ref3
sheriff of, *see* Robert de Mowat
Forres, ref1
castle, ref1, ref2
mills, ref1
Forth, river and firth of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
Forveleth, countess of Atholl, ref1
Forz, William de, count of Aumale, ref1, ref2, ref3
heir, William de Forz, ref1
Fotheringhay Castle, ref1
France, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14, ref15, ref16, ref17, ref18, ref19, ref20, ref21, ref22, ref23, ref24
French architecture, ref1, ref2
kings of, *see* Louis VII, Louis VIII, Louis IX, Philip II
nobility of, ref1, ref2, ref3
relations with Scotland, ref1, ref2, ref3
supports Arthur of Brittany, ref1, ref2
Franciscan order, ref1, ref2, ref3

Furness Abbey, ref1
Gaelic artistic culture, ref1
Gaelic language, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5
Gaelic literate class, ref1, ref2
Gaelic literary culture, ref1, ref2
Galloway, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14, ref15, ref16
diocese of, ref1, ref2 (*see also* Whithorn)
English diplomacy concerning, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
lords of, *see* Alan of Galloway, Roland son of Uhtred
lordship of,
Mull of, ref1
rebellions in, ref1, ref2, ref3
Scottish policy in, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
Galloway, Alan of, lord of Galloway, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13
allies with Rögnvaldr, king of Man, ref1, ref2
campaigns in the Isles, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11
dies, ref1, ref2, ref3
heirs of, ref1, ref2, ref3
illegitimate son of, ref1, ref2 (*see also* Thomas son of Alan of Galloway)
lordship of in north-west England, ref1
marries daughter of Hugh de Lacy, ref1
relationship with King Henry III, ref1, ref2, ref3
relationship with King John, ref1, ref2, ref3
Galloway, Thomas of, earl of Atholl, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14, ref15
sons of, *see* Alan 'son of the earl', Patrick of Atholl
Galwegians, ref1, ref2, ref3
Gascony, ref1, ref2, ref3
Geoffrey, brother of King Richard I and King John, ref1
Gesta Annalia, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14

Gesta Regis Henrici Secundi, ref1 (*see also* Roger of Howden)
Gesta Willelmi Regis, ref1
Giffard family, ref1, ref2, ref3
Gilbert, bishop of Whithorn, ref1, ref2
election of, ref1
master of novices at Melrose, former abbot of Glenluce, ref1
Gilla Coemáin, Gaelic-Irish scholar, ref1
Gillechriosd son of Muirchertach, agent of king of Norway, ref1
'Gilrod', Galwegian rebel, ref1, ref2
Glasgow, ref1
bishop of, ref1, ref2, ref3 (*see also* Jocelin, Walter, William de Bondington, William Malveisin)
bishop's castle, ref1, ref2
canons and chapter of, ref1, ref2, ref3
cathedral, ref1, ref2, ref3
diocese of, ref1, ref2
shrine of St Kentigern at, ref1
Glen Feugh, ref1
Glen Finglas, ref1
Glenfiddich, ref1
Glenluce Abbey, ref1
Gloucester, ref1, ref2
earl of, *see* Richard de Clare
Goltho, ref1
Gospatric, agent of king of Norway, ref1
Govan, hog-back gravestone, ref1
Great Glen, ref1, ref2
Greenland, ref1
Gregory, bishop of Brechin, ref1, ref2
Gregory IX, pope, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
Anglo-Scottish diplomacy of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Grey, Walter de, archbishop of York, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
Grimbaud, Peter, clerk of Henry III, ref1
Grimsby, ref1

Gruffudd ap Llywelyn, brother of Dafydd, prince of Gwynedd, ref1
Guala Bicchieri, cardinal and papal legate, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8
arrives in England, ref1, ref2
dealings with Scottish clergy, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
excommunicates Alexander II, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Guðrøðr II Óláfsson, king of Man and the Isles, ref1, ref2, ref3
sons of, ref1, *see* Óláfr II, Rögnvaldr
Guðrøðr Óláfsson, claimant to Manx throne, ref1
Guðrøðr Rögnvaldsson or Guðrøðr Dond, son of the King of Man and the Isles, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
attacks uncle in Skye, ref1
blinded and castrated, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
killed, ref1
receives kingship of northern Hebrides, ref1, ref2
seeks throne with Norwegian aid, ref1
Gwynedd, ref1
prince of, *see* Dafydd, Llywelyn
Hadden, ref1
Haddington, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7
Halkirk, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Hákon IV, king of Norway, ref1, ref2, ref3
coronation of, ref1, ref2
overlordship of Man and the Isles, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5
Harald Maddadsson, earl of Caithness and Orkney, ref1
Haraldr Guðrøðarsson, son of Guðrøðr Dond, king of Man and the Isles, ref1
Haraldr Óláfsson, king of Man and the Isles, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5
knighted by Henry III, ref1, ref2
marries Cecilia, daughter of Hákon IV, ref1
submission to Hákon IV of Norway, ref1, ref2, ref3
Hassendean, ref1
Hastings, David, earl of Atholl, ref1
Haverhulle, William de, keeper of the king's wine, ref1
Havering-atte-Bowe, ref1, ref2

Hebrides or Western Isles, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13 ref14, ref15, ref16, ref17, ref18, ref19, ref20

Alan of Galloway campaigns in, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11

bishop of, ref1, ref2, ref3

castles in, ref1, ref2

kingdom of Man and the Isles, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14

kings of, ref1 *see* Dubhghall son of Sumarliði, Eógan son of Donnchad mac Dubhghaill, Guðrøðr II Óláfsson, Haraldr Guðrøðarsson, Haraldr Óláfsson, Óláfr I, Óláfr II Guðrøðarson, Rögnvaldr Guðrøðarson, Rögnvaldr Óláfsson, Uspak

kingship of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7

Mhic Dubhghaill ambitions in, ref1

Norwegian interventions in, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8

Scottish interest in, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10

Helen, eldest daughter of Alan of Galloway, ref1

Henry I, king of England, ref1

Henry II, king of England, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7

family of, ref1, ref2

relations of with William king of Scots, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4

Henry III, king of England,

character, ref1, ref2, ref3

control of episcopal nominations by, ref1

coronation at Gloucester, ref1, ref2, ref3

Gascon campaigns of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4

Magna Carta reissued in name of, ref1

marries Eleanor of Provence, ref1

meetings at Newcastle with Alexander II, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6

papal support for, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5 (*see also* Guala, Pandulf)

proposed husband of Margaret, daughter of King William, ref1, ref2, ref3

proposed husband of Margery, daughter of King William, ref1, ref2,

ref3, ref4, ref5
proposed marriage to Joan of Ponthieu, ref1
regents of, ref1, ref2, ref3
relations with English nobility, ref1 (*see also* Gilbert Marshal, Richard Marshal, William Marshal)
relations with Alexander II, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12
relationship with Hubert de Burgh, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
Henry, the Young King, ref1
Henry, abbot of Kelso, ref1
Henry, duke of Saxony, ref1
Henry, earl of Northumberland, son of David I, ref1, ref2
Hereford, earl of, ref1
Highlands, *see* Scotland
Holm Cultram Abbey, ref1, ref2
Holy Island, ref1
Holyrood Abbey, ref1, ref2
Honorius III, pope, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11
excommunicates Alexander II, ref1, ref2
relations with Scotland, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8
Howden, Roger of, ref1, ref2, ref3
Hugh, bishop of Carlisle, ref1
Hugh de Sigillo, bishop of Dunkeld, ref1
Hugh Freskin, lord of Sutherland ref1, ref2
Huntingdon,
earl of, *see* David, John
earldom of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11
earldom properties, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7
sheriff of, *see* Falkes de Bréauté
shire, ref1
Huntly Castle, ref1
Iceland, ref1
inauguration ceremony, ref1, ref2

Inchaffray, Gaelic monastery at, ref1
Ingi Bárðarson, king of Norway, ref1
Innocent III, pope, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
denounces Magna Carta, ref1
King John submits to, ref1, ref2, ref3
Innocent IV, pope, ref1, ref2, ref3
Inverlochy Castle, ref1
Inverness, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7
castle, ref1
Dominican convent at, ref1
Invershin, ref1, ref2
Investiture Crisis, ref1
Iona, nunnery, ref1
Ireland, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14, ref15, ref16, ref17, ref18, ref19, ref20, ref21, ref22, ref23
English government in, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7
Justiciar of, ref1 (*see also* William Marshal)
papal legate to, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Irish Sea, ref1, ref2, ref3
Irvine, ref1, ref2
Isabella, countess of Atholl, ref1
Isabella, daughter of King William, ref1, ref2, ref3
birth of, ref1, ref2
King John of England to arrange marriage of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5
marriage of to Robert Bigod, earl of Norfolk, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
proposed marriage of to William Marshall, ref1, ref2
Isabella, illegitimate daughter of King William, ref1
Isabella, sister of King Henry III of England, ref1
Islay, Sound of, ref1
Isles, *see* Hebrides
Isles, bishop of, ref1, ref2
Jacobins, *see* Dominican order
James, Master, papal penitentiary, legate to Scotland, ref1, ref2

James IV, king of Scots, ref1
Jedburgh, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Joan, eldest sister of Henry III, ref1st wife of Alexander II, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10
burial at Tarrant, ref1
childlessness of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
death of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9
dowry, ref1, ref2
ill-health of, ref1
marriage to Alexander II at York, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
pilgrimage to Canterbury, ref1, ref2
proposed as bride of Alexander II, ref1, ref2
proposed as bride for Hugh de Lusignan, ref1
relationship with husband, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
Joan of Ponthieu, ref1
Jocelin, bishop of Glasgow, ref1
John, king of England, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14, ref15, ref16, ref17, ref18, ref19, ref20, ref21, ref22, ref23, ref24, ref25, ref26, ref27, ref28, ref29
as prince, ref1, ref2
baronial opposition to, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14, ref15, ref16, ref17
coronation of, ref1
courts Scottish nobles, ref1 (*see also* Alan of Galloway, Thomas of Galloway)
death of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
invades Scotland, ref1, ref2
Magna Carta, ref1, ref2, ref3
papal support for, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5
relations with King Alexander II, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14, ref15, ref16, ref17
relations with King William, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13
submission of to Pope Innocent III, ref1, ref2
succession of, ref1, ref2

to arranges marriages of King William's daughters, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9
John, earl of Huntingdon, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9
earl of Huntingdon and Chester, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
heirs-general of, ref1, ref2, ref3
John, earl of Lincoln, ref1
John, Master, rector of church of St Bean Major, ref1
John of Fordun, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
John son of Philip, parker, ref1
Jón, earl of Caithness and Orkney, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
Kelly, ref1
Kelso Abbey, ref1, ref2
Ken, river, ref1
Kenmore, island of, ref1
Kenmure, ref1
Kent, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
earldom of, ref1 (*see also* Hubert de Burgh)
Kerrera,
island of, ref1, ref2, ref3
Sound of, ref1
Kilbride, church of, ref1
Kilwinning, ref1
abbey, ref1
Kincardine,
castle, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5
shire, ref1
Kinclaven Castle, ref1
King's Lynn, ref1
Kinloss Abbey, ref1
Kintore, motte, ref1
Kintyre, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10
lord of, *see* Domhnall mac Raonaill, Ruaidhri mac Raonaill
Kirkham, prior and priory of, ref1
Kirknewton, church of, ref1

Kirkstall Abbey, ref1
Knapdale, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5
Knights Templar, *see* Templars
Kolbein Hruga, ref1
Lacy family, ref1
Lacy, Hugh de, earl of Ulster, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9 (*see also* Walter de Lacy, lord of Meath)
Lacy, Walter de, lord of Meath, ref1
Lanercost chronicle, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8
Langton, Simon, Master, ref1
Langton, Stephen, archbishop of Canterbury, ref1
Langwathby, ref1
Lateran Council (1215), ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Latin language and culture, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
'Lauon', 1st wife of Óláfr II, king of Man and the Isles, ref1
le Poer, Richard, bishop of Salisbury, ref1, ref2
transferred to Durham, ref1, ref2
legates, *see* Guala Bicchieri, James, Otto de Tonengo, Pandulf Masca
Leinster, Marshal lordship of, ref1, ref2, ref3
Lennox, earl of, ref1 (*see also* Maoldomhnaidh)
Lessudden, ref1
Lewis, isle of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7
Liddesdale, ref1
Limesey, Amabilis de, debts of, ref1
Limesay, John de, ref1
Lincoln, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
battle of, ref1, ref2, ref3
bishop of, ref1
cathedral, ref1
earl of, ref1
shire, ref1, ref2
Lindores Abbey, ref1
Lindsay, David de, ref1
heirs of, ref1

Lindsay, David de, justiciar of Lothian, ref1, ref2
Lindsay, David de, tenant in Tyndale, ref1
Lindsay, William, ref1
Linlithgow Castle, ref1
Lismore,
cathedral, ref1
diocese of, ref1
island of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5
Llywelyn ab Iorweth, prince of Gwynedd, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Loch Awe, ref1
Loch Earn, ref1
Loch Etive, ref1
Loch Fleet, ref1
Loch Fyne, ref1, ref2
Loch Ken, ref1
Loch Ness, ref1, ref2
Lochaber, ref1
Logierait, ref1
Lomond Hills, ref1
Longespee, William, earl of Salisbury, ref1
Lothian, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9
archdeaconry of, ref1 (*see also* William del Bois)
homage of Alexander II for, ref1
justiciar of, *see* David de Lindsay, Walter Olifard
ravaged by English invasion force, ref1
Lochland, guardian of Man, ref1
London, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
Dominican friary in, ref1, ref2
Knights Templar at, ref1
St Bride's priory, Clerkenwell, ref1
Tower of, ref1, ref2
Lorn, lordship of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
Louis VII, king of France, ref1
Louis VIII, king of France (the Dauphin Louis),

campaigns in England, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5
clerical supporters of, *see* Robert of St Germain, Simon Langton
dealings with Alexander II, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
death of, ref1
excommunicated by Guala, ref1, ref2
offered throne of England by the Twenty-five, ref1, ref2
submits to Henry III (1217), ref1, ref2, ref3
Louis IX, king of France, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
minority of, ref1
Ludham, ref1
Lulach, king of Scots, ref1
Lumphanan, lordship of, ref1
Lusignan, Hugh de, count of la Marche, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Luss, hog-back gravestone, ref1
Lyons, Council of, ref1, ref2

mac Gille-Chriosd, Gilleasbuig, ref1
Macbeth, king of Scots, ref1
Machan, ref1
MacHeth, Kenneth, claimant to earldom of Ross, ref1, ref2
'MacSomurli', ref1, ref2
MacTaggart, Ferchar, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12
earl of Ross, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5
knighted by Alexander II, ref1
MacWilliam family, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12
bids for throne by, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14, ref15
Donald, ref1, ref2
Donald Bán, ref1, ref2, ref3
Gilleasbuig/Gillescop, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5
Godred, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Mael Sechlainn ua Domnaill, king of Cenél Conaill, ref1
Maeldomhnaigh, ruler of the schools of Muthill, ref1
Magna Carta, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7
Magnus Barelegs, king of Norway, ref1, ref2, ref3
'Malcolm', king of Scots, ref1
Malcolm III, king of Scots, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5
Malcolm IV, king of Scots, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Malcolm, earl of Angus and Caithness, ref1, ref2
Malcolm, earl of Atholl, ref1
Malcolm, earl of Fife, ref1
Malcolm, illegitimate son of King Alexander I, ref1
Malveisin, William, archdeacon of Glasgow, bishop of Glasgow, bishop of St Andrews, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10
chronicle of, ref1, ref2
diplomatic role of, ref1, ref2, ref3
Man, Isle of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14
Man and the Isles,

kingdom of, ref1, *see* Hebrides
kings and kingship of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9 (*see also* Dubhghall son of Sumarliði, Eógan son of Donnchad mac Dubhghaill, Guðrøðr II Óláfsson, Haraldr Óláfsson, Haraldr Guðrøðarsson, Óláfr I, Óláfr II Guðrøðarsson, Rögnvaldr Guðrøðarson, Rögnvaldr Óláfsson, Uspak)
nobles of, ref1
Maoldomhnaidh, earl of Lennox, ref1, ref2
Mar, ref1, ref2
army of province of, ref1, ref2
earl of, ref1, ref2 (*see also* William, Earl of Mar)
earldom of, ref1, ref2
Marcher lords and lordships, ref1
Margaret, countess of Atholl, ref1
Margaret, daughter of Henry III of England, ref1
Margaret, eldest daughter of King William, ref1
birth of, ref1
Countess of Kent, ref1
daughter Margaret, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
King John of England to arrange marriage of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5
marries Hubert de Burgh, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5
proposed marriages of, ref1, ref2
Margaret of Huntingdon, wife of Alan of Galloway, ref1, ref2
Margaret, illegitimate daughter of King William, ref1
Margaret, queen and saint, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7
chapel of, ref1
Margaret, third daughter of King William, ref1, ref2 (*see also* Margery)
Margery, third daughter of King William, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
dies, ref1
marriage to Gilbert Marshal, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5
proposed marriage to Henry III, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
proposed marriage to Richard of Cornwall, ref1
receives Tynedale as *maritagium*, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Marie de Coucy, queen of Scots, ref1nd wife of Alexander II, *see*

Coucy, Marie de
Marsh, Geoffrey, ref1
Marsh, Richard, bishop of Durham, ref1, ref2
Marsh, ‘Robert’, pirate, ref1
Marsh, William, pirate, ref1, ref2
Marshal family, French lands of, ref1, ref2
Marshal, Gilbert, ref1th earl of Pembroke and lord of Leinster, ref1, ref2, ref3
dies, ref1
marries Margaret/Margery, sister of Alexander II, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5
Marshal, Richard, ref1rd earl of Pembroke, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5
Marshal, William senior, ref1st earl of Pembroke, ref1
Marshal, William, ref1nd earl of Pembroke, lord of Leinster, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
controls Huntingdon properties, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
death of, ref1
justiciar of Ireland, ref1
proposed marriages of, ref1, ref2
Martin, Master, papal nuncio in England, ref1
Matilda of Saxony, ref1, ref2
Mauclerc, Peter, duke of Brittany, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Maulay, Peter de, castellan of Corfe, ref1
Mearns, ref1, ref2, ref3
Meath, ref1
Melrose Abbey, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8
abbots of, *see* Adam, William de Courcy
Alexander II’s patronage of, ref1
chronicle of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14, ref15, ref16, ref17, ref18, ref19, ref20, ref21, ref22, ref23, ref24, ref25, ref26, ref27, ref28, ref29, ref30, ref31, ref32, ref33, ref34, ref35, ref36
English barons submit to Alexander II at, ref1, ref2
Melville, Geoffrey de, justiciar, ref1
Melville, Philip de, sheriff of Aberdeen, co-justiciar of Scotia, ref1

Menteith,
earldom of, ref1
earl of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4 (*see also* Walter Comyn)
Meyners, Robert de, ref1, ref2
Mhic Asgaill kin, ref1
Mhic Domhnaill kin, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
castles of, ref1
(*see also* Domhnall)
Mhic Dubhghaill kin, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7 (*see also* Donnchad, Eógan)
Mhic Fionghuin kin, ref1
Mhic Gille Eathain kin, ref1
Mhic Ruaidhrí kin, ref1, ref2 (*see also* Dubhghall mac Ruaidhrí)
Mhic Somhairle kindred, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7
Mingary Castle, ref1
Mitford Castle, ref1, ref2
Moidart, ref1
Monymusk, Gaelic monastery at, ref1
Moravia or Murray family, ref1
Moravia, Gilbert de, archdeacon of Moray, bishop of Caithness, ref1, ref2
elected bishop, ref1, ref2, ref3
lord of Skelbo, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5
venerated as saint, ref1
Moravia, William de, ref1
Moray, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14, ref15, ref16, ref17, ref18, ref19, ref20
archdeacon of, *see* Gilbert de Moravia
bishop of, ref1 (*see also* Andrew de Moravia, Brice Douglas)
cathedral of, *see* Elgin
chancellor of, *see* William
diocese or see of, ref1
Morkinskinna, ref1
Morpeth Castle, ref1
Morville, Helen de, ref1

Morville, Hugh (1) de, ref1
Morville, Hugh (2) de, ref1
mottes, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Mowat, Robert de, sheriff of Forfar, co-justiciar of Scotia, ref1, ref2
Mull, island of, ref1, ref2
Mull of Galloway, ref1
Murray, Walter, ref1
Musselburgh, ref1
assembly at, ref1, ref2
Muthill, Gaelic school at, ref1
Nassington, ref1
Neish's Island, ref1
Neville, Geoffrey de, ref1
Newark-on-Trent, castle, ref1
Newbattle Abbey, ref1
Newcastle, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
castle, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
English army musters at, ref1
King Alexander II and King Henry III meet at, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
King William and King John meet at, ref1, ref2
Niðaros, archdiocese of, ref1
Nith, river, ref1
Nithsdale, ref1
Norfolk,
earl of, ref1 (*see also* Hugh Bigod, Roger Bigod)
earldom, ref1, ref2, ref3
inheritance, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5
shire, ref1, ref2, ref3
Norham, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
bishop of Durham's castle at, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
'treaty' of (1209), ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
Norman-French language, ref1
Normandy, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8

North Tyne, river, ref1
Northallerton, ref1
Northampton, ref1, ref2, ref3
sheriff of, ref1 (*see also* Falkes de Bréauté)
shire, ref1, ref2, ref3
Northumberland, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14, ref15, ref16, ref17, ref18, ref19, ref20
castles of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4 (*see also* Bamburgh, Mitford, Morpeth, Newcastle, Norham, Prudhoe)
earldom of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
sheriff of, *see* Brian son of Alan, Hugh de Bolebec, Philip of Oldcoates
Northumbria, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7
Norway, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13
fleet from, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
influence in kingdom of Man and the Isles, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8
kings of, ref1, ref2, ref3 (*see also* Hákon IV, Ingi Bárðarson, Magnus Barelegs)
relations with Scotland, ref1, ref2, ref3
war with Scotland, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7
warriors from, ref1, ref2
Norwich, bishop-elect of, *see* Pandulf
Oban Bay, ref1
Odo, duke of Burgundy, ref1
Odo, former abbot of Dercongal, elect of Whithorn, ref1
Óláfr I, king of Man and the Isles, ref1
Óláfr II Guðrøðarsson, king of Man and the Isles, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7
conflict with Galloway brothers, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
enmity with brother Rögnvaldr, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
imprisoned by Scots, ref1, ref2
marriages of, ref1
relationship with Ferchar MacTaggart, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
relationship with Henry III of England, ref1, ref2, ref3

submits to Hákon IV of Norway, ref1
Old English language, ref1
Oldcoates, Philip of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
keeper of bishopric of Durham, ref1
sheriff of Northumberland, ref1
Olifard, Walter, justiciar of Lothian, ref1
Onele, lordship of, ref1
Orkney, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5
earldom of, ref1 (*see also* Caithness)
earl of, ref1, ref2, ref3 (*see also* Harald, Jón, Malcolm)
Osbert, bishop of Dunblane, ref1
Otto, cardinal-deacon of St Nicholas, papal legate, ref1
Otto de Tonengo, papal legate, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Otto of Saxony, nephew of Richard I of England, ref1
Oxford, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
earl of, *see* Robert de Vere
Oykel, river, ref1
Pain's Castle, ref1
Paisley Abbey, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Pál Balkisson, 'vicecomes' of Skye, ref1, ref2, ref3
Pandulf Masca, papal legate in England, bishop-elect of Norwich, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
directs English policy, ref1, ref2, ref3
limitations on legation, ref1, ref2
negotiations with Alexander II, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
secures treaty with Alexander II, ref1, ref2
Panmure Castle, ref1
Papacy,
relations with English crown, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7
relations with Scotland, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7
papal bulls, *see Cum universi, Filia specialis*
Paris, ref1
Paris, Matthew, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14, ref15, ref16, ref17, ref18, ref19, ref20, ref21, ref22, ref23

Patrick (1), earl of Dunbar, ref1, ref2
Patrick (2), earl of Dunbar, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5
Patrick of Atholl, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
death of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
heir to earldom of Atholl, ref1, ref2, ref3
killers of, ref1, ref2, ref3
preferred heir to Galloway heritage, ref1, ref2
Patrick son of Constantine of Goswick, ref1
Peebles Castle, ref1, ref2
Peel Cathedral, ref1
Pembroke, earls of, *see* Gilbert Marshal, Richard Marshal, William Marshal senior, William Marshal
Pennine Hills, ref1, ref2, ref3
Penrith, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Pentland, ref1
Perth, ref1, ref2, ref3
bridge of, ref1
castle, ref1
council meetings at, ref1, ref2, ref3
Dominican convent at, ref1
shire, ref1, ref2, ref3
Philip II, king of France, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
Philip, his son, ref1
Pitgorno, ref1
Pluscarden,
chronicle of, ref1
priory, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5
Poitou, ref1,
barons of (Poitevin), ref1, ref2
Ponteland, ref1
Popes, *see* Celestine III, Gregory IX, Honorius III, Innocent III, Innocent IV
Portsmouth, ref1
primogeniture, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Prudhoe Castle, ref1

Pyrenees, ref1
Quincy, Roger de, earl of Winchester, ref1, ref2, ref3
Quincy, Saher de, earl of Winchester, ref1, ref2
‘Rathenach’ (lost), thanage site, ref1
Rattray, excavations at, ref1
Reading, ref1
Renfrew, ref1
Richard I, king of England, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5
relations with King William of Scotland, ref1, ref2
Richard of Cornwall, brother of King Henry III of England, ref1, ref2
Gascon expedition of, ref1
proposed marriage of to sister of King Alexander II, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
relationship with brother, ref1, ref2
Rievaulx Abbey, ref1
Robert II, king of Scots, ref1
Robert, count of Dreux, ref1
Rockingham, ref1, ref2, ref3
Roches, Peter des, bishop of Winchester, ref1
heads Henry III’s administration, ref1, ref2, ref3
Rochester Castle, ref1
Rodoric (Ruaidhri mac Raonaill?), ref1, ref2
Rögnvaldr Guðrøðarson, king of Man and the Isles, ref1, ref2, ref3
alliance of with Alan of Galloway, ref1, ref2
assumes throne, ref1
English influence over, ref1
killed, ref1, ref2, ref3
marries kinswoman of Ruaidhri mac Raonaill, ref1
relationship with half–brother Óláfr, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Scottish support for, ref1, ref2
son, *see* Guðrøðr
Rögnvaldr Óláfsson, king of Man and the Isles, ref1
Rögnvaldr/Ragnall son of Sumarliði, ref1
Roland son of Uhtred, lord of Galloway, ref1

Roman de Fergus, ref1
Rome, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14, ref15, ref16, ref17, ref18, ref19, ref20, ref21, ref22, ref23, ref24, ref25, ref26, ref27
Ronaldsway, ref1
Ros, Robert de, lord of Wark-on-Tweed, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
brother-in-law of King Alexander II, ref1, ref2, ref3
marriage to Isabella, illegitimate daughter of King William, ref1
Ros, William de, lordship of in Tynedale, ref1
Rose, daughter of Hugh de Lacy, ref1
Ross, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11
bishop of, ref1, ref2
earldom, ref1, ref2
earls of, see Ferchar
Rothesay Castle, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Roxburgh, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5
castle, ref1, ref2
church of St John in the castle, ref1
Dominican convent at, ref1
Ruaidhri mac Raonaill, lord of Kintyre, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6 (*see also* Mhic Ruaidhrí kin)
association with MacWilliams, ref1, ref2, ref3
headship of Clann Somhairle, ref1, ref2
relationship with Alexander II, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Rubha an Dunan, ref1
Runnymede, ref1, ref2
Rushen, ref1
abbey of, ref1
Rutherglen, ref1
St Albans, abbey, ref1
St Andrews, ref1, ref2
bishop of, ref1, ref2, ref3, *see* David de Bernham, William Malveisin
castle, ref1, ref2
cathedral, ref1
chronicle tradition at, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9,

ref10
diocese, ref1, ref2, ref3
St Columba, ref1
St Edward the Confessor, cult of, ref1, ref2, ref3 (*see also* Balmerino Abbey)
St Fillans, ref1
St Germain, Robert of, ref1, ref2, ref3
St Kentigern, shrine of, ref1
St Magnus, ref1
St Mary, dedications to, ref1
St Moluag, church of, ref1
St Olaf, ref1
Salisbury, ref1
bishop of, *see* Richard le Poer
earl of, *see* William Longespee
Salkeld, ref1
Savoy, Thomas of, count of Flanders and Hainault, ref1
Saxony, duchy of, ref1, ref2, ref3
Scarborough, ref1
Scone, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5
Gaelic school at, ref1
Scot, Matthew, canon of Dunkeld, chancellor, bishop-elect of Dunkeld, ref1
Scotby, ref1
Scotichronicon, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8
Scotland
Anglo-Norman cultural influences in, ref1, ref2, ref3
'Anglo-Norman' settlers in, ref1
Anglo-Saxon or English cultural influence in, ref1, ref2
Atlantic, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9
barons and nobility of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14, ref15, ref16, ref17, ref18, ref19 (*see also* political community)
bishops of, ref1, ref2, ref3 (*see also* Aberdeen, Argyll, Brechin, Caithness, Dunblane, Dunkeld, Glasgow, the Isles, Moray, Ross, St

Andrews, Whithorn)
border of, ref1
castle architecture in, ref1
culture, see Gaelic, Latin
ecclesiastical architecture in, ref1
English-speaking settlers in, ref1
Frankish cultural influence in, ref1, ref2, ref3
Gaelic noble classes in, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8
Gaelic regions of, ref1
Gothic architecture in, ref1, ref2
Highlands of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8
histories of, ref1
kings of, *see* Alexander I, Alexander II, Alexander III, David I, Donald III, Duncan II, Edgar, James IV, Malcolm III, Malcolm IV, Robert II
Lowland, colonisation in, ref1
mainland of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14, ref15, ref16, ref17, ref18, ref19, ref20, ref21, ref22, ref23, ref24, ref25, ref26, ref27, ref28, ref29
merchants of, ref1
Norse-Gaelic maritime culture in, ref1
northern mainland, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10
papal legates to, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5 (*see also* Guala, James, Otto (2), Pandulf)
political community of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5
queens of, *see* Ermengarde, Joan, Margaret, Marie
Romanesque architecture in, ref1
royal archives, ref1
royal succession in, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
wars with England, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14, ref15, ref16, ref17, ref18, ref19, ref20, ref21
wars with Norway, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Scottish Church, ref1
episcopal appointments, ref1, ref2

French cultural community within, ref1
independence of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
interdict (1217), ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10
Scourby, ref1
Selkirk, motte, ref1
sennachaidh, ref1, ref2
Serlo, monk of Newbattle, ref1, ref2
Shetland, ref1
Simon, bishop of the Isles, ref1
Simonburn, ref1
church of, ref1
Skelbo, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5
Skye, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
see also Pál Balkisson
Solway Firth, ref1, ref2
Spey, river, ref1, ref2
Speyside, ref1
Spynie, cathedral of Moray at, ref1
Stainmore, ref1, ref2
Stanton, manor of, ref1, ref2
Stephen of Anagni, papal tax-collector in England, Ireland and Scotland, ref1
Steward and Stewart family, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
see also Alan son of Walter, Alexander, Walter II son of Alan
Stichill, William, Master, archdeacon of Worcester, bishop-elect of Durham, ref1, ref2
Stirling, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
castle, ref1, ref2, ref3
council meetings at, ref1, ref2, ref3
Dominican convent at, ref1
Stirling, Gilbert of, royal clerk, bishop of Aberdeen, ref1
Stirling, Henry of, cousin of Alexander II, ref1
Stirling, Thomas of, chancellor of King Alexander II, ref1
Strachan, motte, ref1
Strathbraan, ref1

Strathearn, ref1
bishop of, *see* Clement, bishop of Dunblane
earls of, ref1
Strathfarrar, ref1
Strathnaver, ref1
Suffolk, ref1
Sumarliði, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
sons of, ref1, *see* Aonghus, Dubhghall, Rögnvaldr/Ragnall
Sumarliði mac Dubhghaill, ref1
Sumburgh Head, ref1
Sutherland, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8
earl of, *see* William son of Hugh
earldom of, ref1
lord of, ref1 (*see also* Hugh Freskin)
lordship of, ref1
Swaledale, ref1
Tairdelbach ua Conchobair, high-king of Ireland, ref1
Talebot, William, ref1
Tarbert,
castle, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
East Loch, ref1
Tarrant Abbey, ref1
Tarset, lordship of, ref1
Tay, river and firth, ref1, ref2
Teesdale, ref1, ref2
Templars, ref1
The Twenty-five, ref1, ref2, ref3
Thirlestane, Thomas of, lord of Abertarff, ref1
Thirsk, ref1
Thomas, son of Alan of Galloway, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5
Thomas, son of Ranulf, clerk of Alexander II, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Thurso, ref1, ref2
timber building tradition, ref1, ref2 *passim*, ref1
Gaelic, ref1

Tioram Castle, ref1, ref2
Tiree, island of, ref1
Tironensian order, ref1, ref2
Toulouse, ref1
Traquair, ref1
Trent, river, ref1, ref2
Treshnish Islands, ref1
Trim Castle, ref1
Trowup, lands of Melrose Abbey at, ref1
Tweed, river, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5
Tweedmouth, bishop of Durham's castle at, ref1, ref2
Tynedale, lordship of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10
Tynwald, ref1
Tytler, Patrick, ref1
Uí Conchobair family, *see* Cathal Crobderg, Diarmait, Tairdelbach
Uí Néill family, ref1, ref2 (*see also* Áed Méith)
Ulster, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13
earldom of, ref1, ref2, ref3
earls of, *see* Hugh de Lacy
Urquhart Castle, ref1, ref2
Uspak son of Dubhghall, king in the Isles, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Val des Choux, ref1, ref2
Valliscaulian order, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7 (*see also* Ardchattan, Beauly, Pluscarden)
Valognes family, ref1
Valognes, Philip de, chamberlain of the king of Scots, ref1
Vere, Robert de, earl of Oxford, ref1
Vescy, Eustace de, lord of Alnwick, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
baronial opponent of King John of England, ref1, ref2, ref3
marriage to Margaret, illegitimate daughter of King William, ref1, ref2
Viard, founder of Valliscaulian order, ref1
Vieuxpont, Robert de, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
Wales, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7

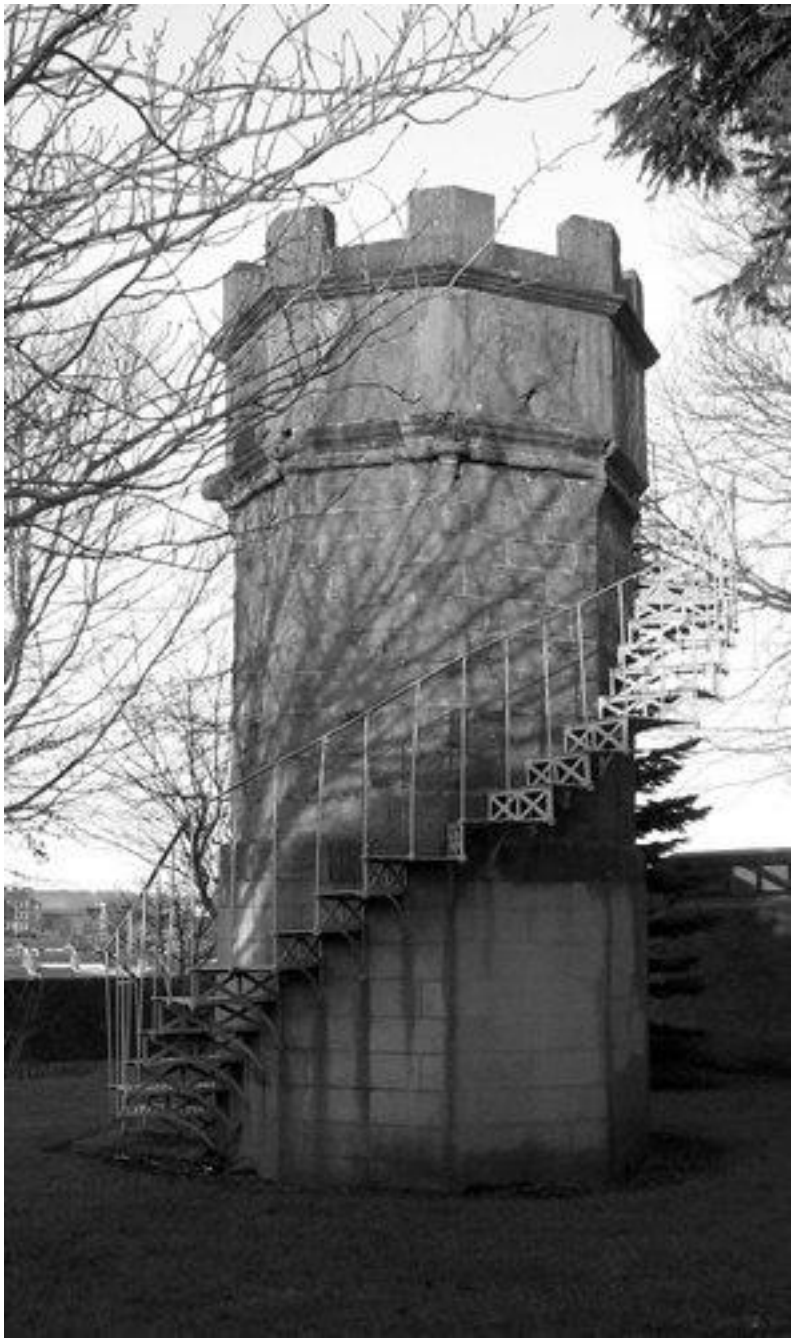
Wallingford, ref1
Walter II son of Alan, the Steward, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
justiciar of Scotia, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Walter, bishop of Glasgow, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7
Walter, bishop of Whithorn, ref1, ref2
Warenne, earl, ref1, ref2
kinsmen of kings of Scots, ref1
Wark in Tynedale, ref1
Wark-on-Tweed, castle and lands of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Wars of Independence, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
The Wash, ref1
Welsh March, ref1, ref2, ref3
Wendover, Roger of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5
Western Isles, see Hebrides
Westminster, ref1, ref2
Westmorland, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8
Whithorn,
bishop of, *see* Gilbert, Walter
cathedral-priory, ref1
elect of, *see* Odo
prior and convent, ref1
see of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
suffragan of York, ref1
Wigtown, ref1
sheriffdom of, ref1, ref2
William, chancellor of Moray, bishop of Argyll, ref1, ref2, ref3
William, earl of Mar, ref1, ref2
William ‘the Lion’, king of Scots, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14, ref15, ref16, ref17, ref18, ref19, ref20
daughters of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7 (*see also* Isabella, Margaret, Margery)
death of, ref1, ref2, ref3
dynastic opponents of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6 (*see also* MacWilliam family)

funeral of, ref1
heritage of in northern England, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9
homage of, demanded by King John, ref1, ref2
illegitimate children of, ref1 (*see also* Isabella, Margaret)
ill–health of, ref1, ref2
marriage to Ermengarde de Beaumont, ref1, ref2
physicians of (Master Martin and Master Ralph), ref1
political settlement in northern Scotland, ref1, ref2, ref3
relations with David, earl of Huntingdon, ref1, ref2, ref3
relations with English kings, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14, ref15, ref16
relations with France, ref1, ref2, ref3
relations with Scottish nobility, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
religious patronage of, ref1, ref2
succession to, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7
see also Falaise, Treaty of
William son of Hugh, earl of Sutherland, ref1
William son of King Duncan II, ref1, ref2, ref3
children of, ref1 (*see also* MacWilliam family)
Wiltshire, sheriff of, ref1
Winchester, ref1
bishop of, *see* Peter des Roches
castle, ref1
earl of, *see* Roger de Quincy, Saher de Quincy
Windsor, ref1
Wisbech, Walter of, archdeacon of East Riding of Yorkshire, ref1
Woodstock, ref1
Worcester, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
archdeacon of, *see* William Stichill
bishop of, *see* Walter de Cantilupe
Wyntoun, Andrew of, ref1, ref2
Wyre, Island of, ref1
Yardley, ref1, ref2
Yarwell, ref1

York, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14, ref15, ref16
Alexander II at, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6
archbishops of, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7 (*see also* Walter de Grey)
Church of, ref1, ref2
marriage of Alexander II and Princess Joan at, ref1, ref2
metropolitan supremacy over Scottish Church, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4
Minster, ref1
Treaty of (1220), ref1, ref2, ref3
Treaty of (1237), ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8, ref9, ref10, ref11, ref12, ref13, ref14
Yorkshire, ref1, ref2, ref3, ref4, ref5, ref6, ref7, ref8
archdeacon of East Riding of, ref1
rebel barons in, ref1, ref2

1. Norham Castle, Northumberland: scene of William the Lion's stormy meeting with King John.

2. Arbroath Abbey, Angus: Alexander's first formal act as king was to join the cortege carrying his father's body from the bridgend at Perth to its burial-place in William's unfinished abbey at Arbroath.



3. Forfar Castle, Angus: the nineteenth-century tower marks the site of the royal castle where Alexander held his first Christmas court in 1214.

4. Brougham Castle, Cumbria: the donjon of Robert de Vieuxpont's castle which held out against Scottish attack in the war of 1215–17.

5. Barnard Castle, Co. Durham: Alexander failed to take the castle during his race south to join the Dauphin Louis at Dover.

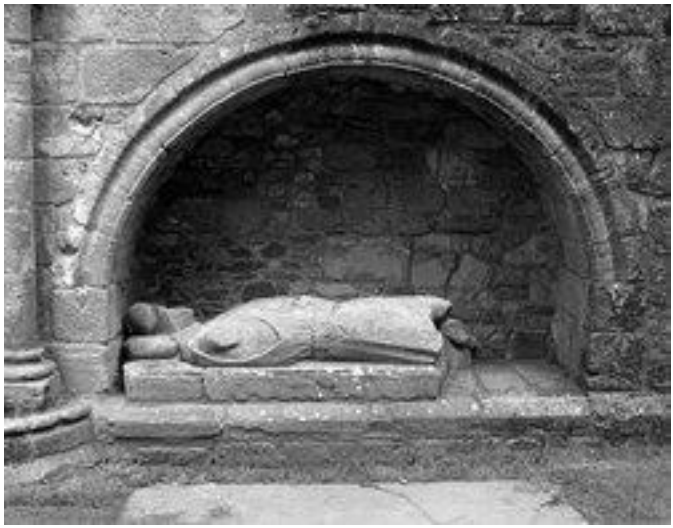
6. York Minster, York: scene of Alexander's marriage to Joan, sister of Henry III of England.

7. Tarbert Castle, Argyll and Bute: the grass-grown ruins of the castle built by Alexander to dominate Kintyre and the adjacent islands.

8. Fotheringhay Castle, Northamptonshire: only earthworks survive of the key castle of the earldom of Huntingdon, which Alexander sought to control during the minority of his cousin, Earl John.

9. Council Buildings, Forfar, Angus: the market cross where the last member of the MacWilliam family was brutally slain in 1231 stood in the street in front of the later burgh-council meeting-place.

10. Rothesay Castle, Argyll and Bute: stormed by the Norwegians in 1230 during their intervention in the civil war in the kingdom of the Isles.



11. Tomb of Alan of Galloway, Dundrennan Abbey, Dumfries and Galloway: the broken effigy in the north transept is identified traditionally as that of the last and greatest of Galloway's native rulers.

12. Urquhart Castle, Highland: the highest point of the castle at centre right is the remains of the shell-keep built by Alan Durward, to whom Alexander had granted this highly-strategic lordship which controlled the Great Glen.

13. Coucy-le-Chateau en Affrique, France: the outer curtain of the great castle of Queen Marie's family in north-eastern France.

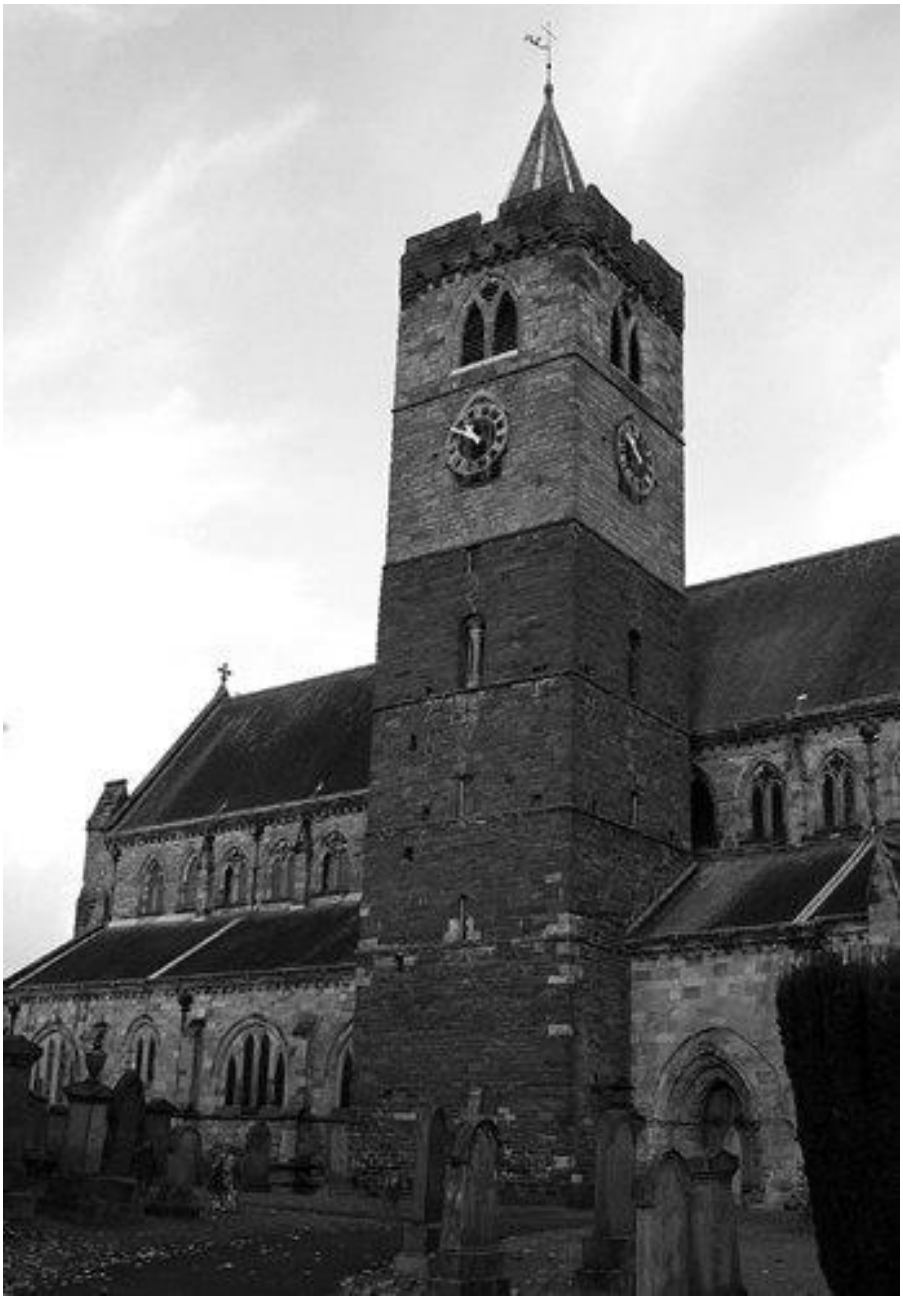
14. Sound of Kerrera, Argyll and Bute: looking south across Oban Bay from Dunollie towards the island of Kerrera where Alexander died.

15. Melrose Abbey, Scottish Borders: the abbey church looking east from the fragments of the twelfth-century west front, the only surviving portion of the church that Alexander knew, towards the site of his tomb in the choir.

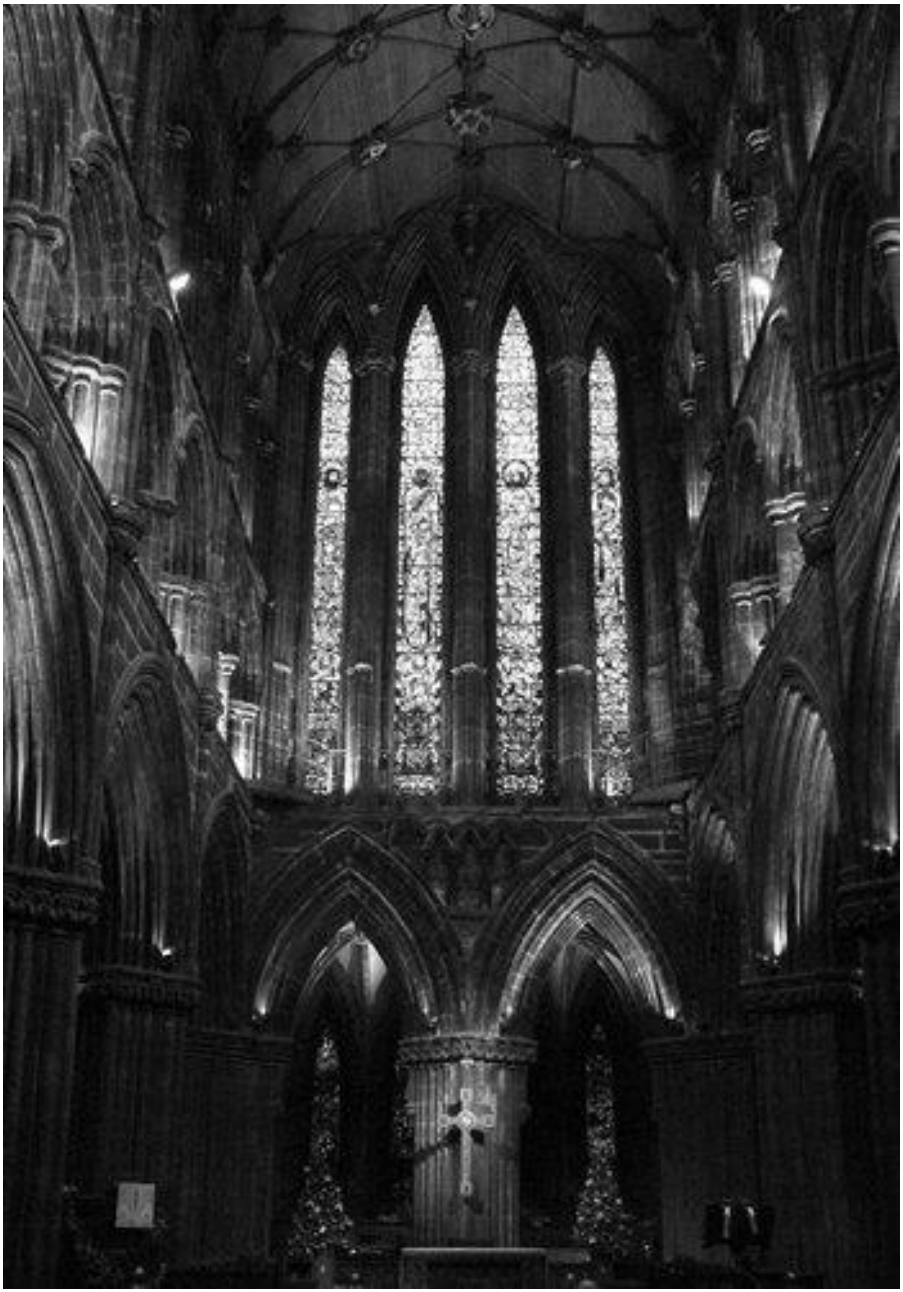
16. Balmerino Abbey, Fife: the fragmentary remains of the Cistercian abbey founded by Queen Ermengarde and the location of her tomb.

17. Pluscarden Priory, Moray: the restored crossing and choir of the church of the Valliscaulian monastery founded by Alexander II at the end of his long struggle with the MacWilliams.

18. Elgin Cathedral, Moray: the western towers and south transept of the new cathedral church commenced by Bishop Andrew de Moravia.



19. Dunblane Cathedral, Stirling: the tower of the cathedral inherited by Bishop Clement in 1233 and the nave of the new church which he commenced.



20. Glasgow Cathedral, Glasgow: interior of the choir of Bishop William de Bondington's cathedral.